

## Ancient Heretical Literature

Much of the heretical literature of the second century was produced by the Gnostic sects. The teaching of the Gnostics was deeply heretical. Their Christology is called *Docetic*, because they asserted that Christ only seemed (Greek, *docein*) to have a body of flesh, but that he was entirely a spirit being, like the angels. They made this assertion because they were much influenced by certain Greek philosophers, who taught that material things were necessarily corrupt, and that matter itself was either illusory or always at odds with spiritual realities. The Gnostics saw Jesus only as a divine revealer of spiritual truths, and believed that salvation was attained by those few who were able to understand his mysterious teachings and actions; they believed in a spiritual resurrection through the attainment of wisdom. The Gnostic cults died out during the fourth century, and their literature was almost entirely lost. Before the middle of the twentieth century, modern scholars were dependent upon descriptions and quotations of this literature in the writings of the orthodox Church Fathers who opposed it in ancient times. But around 1945 a substantial collection of ancient Gnostic literature came to light in several Coptic manuscripts discovered in the neighborhood of Nag Hammadi, Egypt. The following extracts are from published English translations of these manuscripts, and they illustrate the typical themes of Gnostic teaching.

### The Gospel According to Thomas

Below is an English translation of the first 28 lines of the Gospel According to Thomas, from the edition *The Gospel According to Thomas: Coptic Text Established and Translated by A. Guillaumont, H.-Ch. Puech, G. Quispel, W. Till, and Yassah 'Abd Al Masih* (Leiden: E.J. Brill, 1959), pp. 3-5.

The first page of the Gospel According to Thomas

"These are the secret words which the living Jesus spoke and Didymos Judas Thomas wrote. And he said, Whoever finds the explanation of these word will not taste death. Jesus said: Let him who seeks, not cease seeking until he finds, and when he finds, he will be troubled, and when he has been troubled, he will marvel and he will reign over the All. Jesus said: If those who lead you say to you: 'See, the Kingdom is in heaven,' then the birds of the heaven will precede you. If they say to you: 'It is in the sea,' then the fish will precede you. But the Kingdom is within you and it is without you. If you will know yourselves, then you will be known and you will know that you are the sons of the Living Father. But if you do not know yourselves, then you are in poverty and you are poverty. Jesus said: The man old in days will not hesitate to ask a little child of seven days about the place of Life, and he will live. For many who are first shall become last and they shall become a single one. Jesus said: Know what is in thy sight, and what is hidden from thee will be revealed to thee. For there is nothing hidden which will not be manifest. His disciples asked Him, they said to Him: Wouldst thou that we fast and how should we pray and should we give alms and what diet should we observe? Jesus said: Do not lie; and do not do what you hate, for all things are manifest before Heaven. For there is nothing hidden that shall not be revealed and there is nothing covered that shall remain without being uncovered. Jesus said: Blessed is the lion which the man eats and the lion will become man; and cursed is the man whom the lion eats and the lion will become man."

Photo courtesy of the [Institute for Antiquity and Christianity](#) in Claremont, California.

### The Gospel of Phillip

The following lines from *The Gospel of Phillip* illustrate the typical *Docetic* Christology of the Gnostic sects. The English translation is by Wesley W. Isenberg, in James M. Robinson, ed., *The Nag Hammadi Library in English, translated and introduced by members of the Coptic Gnostic Library Project of the Institute for Antiquity and Christianity, Claremont, California*, third edition (Leiden: E.J. Brill, 1988), pp. 144-45.

"Jesus took them all by stealth, for he did not appear as he was, but in the manner in which they would be able to see him . . . He appeared to the angels as an angel, and to men as a man. Because of this his word hid itself from everyone . . . When he appeared to his disciples in glory on the mount . . . he made the disciples great that they might be able to see him in his greatness."

### The Second Treatise of the Great Seth

The following portion of *The Second Treatise of the Great Seth* illustrates how the Gnostics viewed the Old Testament. The words *Hebdomad*, meaning "the seventh god," and *Archon*, "the ruler," are epithets they used in reference to the God of Israel. English translation by Roger A. Bullard and Joseph A. Gibbons, in James M. Robinson, ed., *The Nag Hammadi Library in English, translated and introduced by members of the Coptic Gnostic Library Project of the Institute for Antiquity and Christianity, Claremont, California*, third edition (Leiden: E.J. Brill, 1988), pp. 368-69.

"Adam was a laughingstock, since he was made a counterfeit type of man by the Hebdomad, as if he had become stronger than I and my brothers . . . Abraham and Isaac and Jacob were a laughingstock . . . David was a laughingstock . . . the prophets were laughingstocks . . . they came into being as counterfeits . . . Moses, a 'faithful servant,' was a laughingstock, having been named 'The Friend' since they perversely bore witness concerning him who never knew me . . . the Archon was a laughingstock because he said, 'I am God, and there is none greater than I. I alone am the Father, the Lord, and there is none other beside me. I am a jealous God, who brings the sins of the fathers upon the children for three and four generations,' as if he had become stronger than I and my brothers. Thus he was in an empty glory . . . I did not succumb to them as they had planned. But I was not afflicted at all . . . I did not die in reality but in appearance . . . I removed the shame from me . . . It was another . . . who drank the gall and the vinegar . . . who bore the cross . . . upon whom they placed the crown of thorns. But I was rejoicing in the height over all . . . I was laughing at their ignorance. I am Christ, the Son of Man."



### The Nag Hammadi Codices

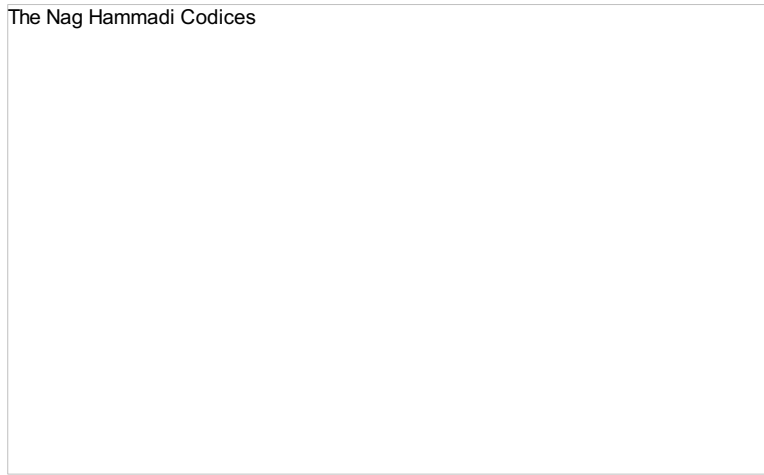


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[Bible Research](#) > [Canon](#) > Heretical Literature









WIKIPEDIA  
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navigation

- Main page
- Contents
- Featured content
- Current events
- Random article

search

Go Search

interaction

- About Wikipedia
- Community portal
- Recent changes
- Contact Wikipedia
- Donate to Wikipedia
- Help

toolbox

- What links here
- Related changes
- Upload file
- Special pages
- Printable version
- Permanent link
- Qte this page

languages

- Català
- Český
- Dansk
- Deutsch
- Ελληνικά
- Español
- Esperanto
- Français
- Furlan
- 한국어
- Bahasa Indonesia
- Italiano
- עברית
- Lietuvių
- Magyar
- Nederlands
- 日本語
- Norsk (bokmål)
- Polski
- Português
- Русский
- Simple English
- Qırıqlıq / Srpski
- Suomi
- Svenska
- Українська
- 中文

## Biblical canon

From Wikipedia, the free encyclopedia

A **Biblical canon** or *canon of scripture*<sup>[1]</sup> is a list or set of Biblical books considered to be authoritative as scripture by a particular religious community, generally in Judaism or Christianity. The term itself was first coined by Christians, but the idea is found in Jewish sources.<sup>[2]</sup> The internal wording of the text can also be specified, for example: the Masoretic Text is the *canonical text* for Judaism.

The *canons* listed below are usually considered *closed* (i.e., books cannot be added or removed<sup>[3]</sup>). The closure of the *canon* reflects a belief that public revelation has ended and thus the inspired texts may be gathered into a complete and authoritative *canon*.<sup>[4]</sup> By contrast, an *open canon* permits the addition of additional books through the process of continuous revelation.

These canonical books have been developed through debate and agreement by the religious authorities of their respective faiths. Believers consider these *canonical* books to be inspired by God or to express the authoritative history of the relationship between God and his people. Books excluded from a particular *canon* are considered *non-canonical* — however, many disputed books considered *non-canonical* or even apocryphal by some are considered Biblical apocrypha or Deuterocanonical or fully *canonical*, by others. There are differences between the Jewish and Christian canons, and between the *canons* of different Christian denominations. The differing criteria and processes of *canonization* dictate what the communities regard as the inspired books.

<div><div><div>Contents [hide]</div></div></div>
1 Canonical texts
2 Jewish canon
3 Samaritan canon
4 Christian canons
4.1 Earliest Christian Communities
4.2 Apostolic Fathers
4.3 Alexandrian Fathers
4.4 Latin Fathers
4.5 Luther
4.6 Closing of the canons
5 Modern interpretation
5.1 Ethiopian and Syriac Churches
5.2 Evangelical Protestant view
6 See also
7 Footnotes
8 References
9 Further reading
10 External links

### Canonical texts

[edit]

The word "canon" is derived from the Greek noun κανών "kanon" meaning "reed" or "cane," or also "rule" or "measure," which itself is derived from the Hebrew word קנה "kaneh" and is often used as a standard of measurement. Thus, a *canonical text* is a single authoritative edition for a given work. The establishing of a *canonical text* may involve an editorial selection from biblical manuscript traditions with varying interdependence. Significant separate manuscript traditions in the Hebrew Bible are represented in the Septuagint, the Targums and Peshitta, the Samaritan Pentateuch, the Masoretic Text, and the Dead Sea scrolls.

New Testament Greek and Latin texts presented enough significant differences that a manuscript tradition arose of presenting *diglot* texts, with Greek and Latin on facing pages. New Testament manuscript traditions include the Codex Vaticanus, Codex Sinaiticus, Codex Bezae, Codex Alexandrinus, Textus Receptus, Vetus Latina, Vulgate, and others, see Categories of New Testament manuscripts.

### Jewish canon

[edit]

*Main article: Development of the Jewish Bible canon*

Rabbinic Judaism recognizes the twenty-four books of the Masoretic Text, commonly called the *Tanakh* or *Hebrew Bible*. Evidence suggests that the *process of canonization* occurred between 200 BC and AD 200, indeed a *popular position* is that the Torah was *canonized* circa 400 BC, the Prophets circa 200 BC, and the Writings circa AD 100<sup>[5]</sup> perhaps at a hypothetical Council of Jamnia—however this position is increasingly criticised by modern scholars. The book of Deuteronomy includes a prohibition against adding or subtracting (4:2 , 12:32 ) which might apply to the book itself (i.e. a *closed book*, a prohibition against future scribal editing) or to the instruction received by Moses on Mt. Sinai.<sup>[6]</sup> The book of 2 Maccabees, itself not a part of the *Jewish canon*, describes Nehemiah (around 400 BC) as having "founded a library and collected books about the kings and prophets, and the writings of David, and letters of kings about votive offerings" (2:13-15 ). The Book of Nehemiah suggests that the priest-scribe Ezra brought the Torah back from Babylon to Jerusalem and the Second Temple (8-9 ) around the same time period. Both I and II Maccabees suggest that Judas Maccabeus (around 167 BC) likewise collected sacred books (3:42-50 , 2:13-15 , 15:6-9 ), indeed some scholars argue that the *Jewish canon* was fixed by the Hasmonean dynasty.<sup>[7]</sup> However, these primary sources do not suggest that the *canon* was at that time *closed*; moreover, it is not clear that these sacred books were identical to those that later became part of the *canon*. "The Men of the Great Assembly", also known as the Great Synagogue, was, according to Jewish tradition, an assembly of 120 scribes, sages, and prophets, in the period from the end of the Biblical prophets to the time of the development of Rabbinic Judaism, marking a transition from an era of prophets to an era of Rabbis. They lived in a period of about two centuries ending c. 70 CE.<sup>[1]</sup>

Among the developments in Judaism that are attributed to them are the fixing of the Jewish Biblical canon, including the books of Ezekiel, Daniel, Esther, and the Twelve Minor Prophets; the introduction of the triple classification of the oral law, dividing the study of the Mishnah (in the larger sense) into the three branches of midrash, halakot, and aggadot; the introduction of the Feast of Purim; and the institution of the prayer known as the "Shemoneh 'Esreh" as well as the synagogal prayers, rituals, and benedictions.

### Samaritan canon

[edit]

*Main article: Samaritan Pentateuch*

A *Samaritan Pentateuch* exists which is another version of the Torah, in this case in the Samaritan alphabet. The relationship to the Masoretic Text and the Septuagint is still disputed. Scrolls among the Dead Sea scrolls have been identified as proto-Samaritan Pentateuch text-type.<sup>[8]</sup> This text is associated with the Samaritans, a people of whom the Jewish Encyclopedia<sup>[9]</sup> states: "Their history as a distinct community begins with the taking of Samaria by the Assyrians in 722 B.C."

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The Bible

Biblical canon and books

Tanakh: Torah · Nevi'im · Ketuvim

Old Testament · New Testament · Hebrew Bible

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Chapters & verses

Apocrypha: Jewish · OT · NT

Development and authorship

Jewish Canon

Old Testament canon

New Testament canon

Mosaic authorship

Pauline epistles

Johannine works

Petrine epistles

Translations and manuscripts

Septuagint · Samaritan Pentateuch

Dead Sea scrolls · Masoretic text

Targums · Peshitta

Vetus Latina · Vulgate

Gothic Bible · Luther Bible

English Bibles

Biblical studies

Dating the Bible

Biblical criticism

Higher criticism

Textual criticism

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Novum Testamentum Graece

Documentary hypothesis

Synoptic problem

NT textual categories

Historicity (People)

Internal Consistency

Archeology · Artifacts

Science and the Bible

Interpretation

Hermeneutics · Peshher

Midrash · Pardes

Allegorical · Literalism

Prophecy

Views

Inerrancy · Infallibility · Criticism

Islamic · Qur'anic · Gnostic

Judaism and Christianity

Biblical law in Judaism

Biblical law in Christianity

This box: view · talk · edit

Bible portal

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The Samaritans accept the Torah but do not accept any other parts of the Bible, probably a position also held by the Sadducees.<sup>[10]</sup> Moreover, they did not expand their Pentateuchal canon even by adding any Samaritan compositions.

Both texts from the [Church Fathers](#) and old Samaritan texts provide us with reasons for the limited extent of the *Samaritan Canon*. According to some of the information the Samaritans parted with the Jews ([Judeans](#)) at such an early date that only the books of Moses were considered holy; according to other sources the group intentionally rejected the Prophets and (possibly) the other Scriptures and entrenched themselves in the *Law of Moses*.

The small community of the remnants of the Samaritans in Palestine includes their version of the *Torah* in their *canon*.<sup>[1]</sup> The Samaritan community possesses a copy of the *Torah* that they believe to have been penned by Abisha, a grandson of Aaron.<sup>[citation needed]</sup>

## Christian canons

[edit]

*Main article: [Christian Biblical canons](#)*

See also: [Development of the Christian Biblical canon](#)

The Biblical canon is the set of books Christians regard as divinely inspired and thus constituting the Christian [Bible](#).

## Earliest Christian Communities

[edit]

Though the [Early Church](#) used the [Old Testament](#) according to the canon of the [Septuagint](#) (LXX),<sup>[12]</sup> the [apostles](#) did not otherwise leave a defined set of new [scriptures](#); instead the [New Testament](#) developed over time.

A folio from **P46**, an early 3rd century collection of **Pauline epistles**.

The writings attributed to the apostles circulated amongst the earliest Christian communities. The [Pauline epistles](#) were circulating in collected form by the end of the first century AD. [Justin Martyr](#), in the early second century, mentions the "memoirs of the apostles," which Christians called "gospels" and which were regarded as on par with the Old Testament.<sup>[13]</sup>

The first major figure to codify the Biblical canon was [Origen](#) of Alexandria<sup>[\[citation needed\]](#)</sup>. He was a scholar well educated in the realm of both theology and pagan philosophy. Origen decided to make his canon include all of the books in the current Catholic canon except for four books: [James](#), [2nd Peter](#), and [2nd and 3rd epistles of John](#)<sup>[\[14\]](#)</sup>. He also included the [Shepherd of Hermas](#) which was later rejected. The religious scholar [Bruce Metzger](#) described Origen's efforts, saying "The process of canonization represented by Origen proceeded by way of selection, moving from many candidates for inclusion to fewer."<sup>[\[citation needed\]](#)</sup> This was the first major attempt at the compilation of certain books and letters as authoritative and inspired teaching for the Catholic Church at the time.

Needless to say there are various theologians of the 2nd and 3rd centuries that wrote a great deal of works and used the letters of the apostles as foundation and

justification for their own personal beliefs. However, there was still the problem of the Roman Empire, and while the persecutions of the Roman Empire were many and extreme, the persecution still occurred and possibly interfered with the initial canonization of the New Testament. This period in church history writings is known as the "Edificatory Period" and was followed by the "Apologetic", "Polemical" and "Scientific" Periods. Some of the Christian writers of this edificatory Period are: Irenaeus, Hippolytus, Tertullian, Cyprian, Justin Martyr, Clement of Rome.<sup>[*citation needed*]</sup> This stagnation of official writings lead to a sudden explosion of discussions after **Constantine I** legalized Christianity in the early 4th century.

## Apostolic Fathers

A four gospel canon (the *Tetramorph*) was asserted by [Irenaeus](#), c. 160.<sup>[15]</sup> By the early 200's, [Origen of Alexandria](#) may have been using the same 27 books found in modern New Testament editions, though there were still disputes over the canonicity of Hebrews, James, II Peter, II and III John, and Revelation (see also [Antilegomena](#)).<sup>[16]</sup> Likewise by 200 the [Muratorian fragment](#) shows that there existed a set of Christian writings somewhat similar to what is now the [editio](#) New Testament, which included four gospels and argued against objections to them.<sup>[17]</sup> Thus, while there was a good measure of debate in the Early Church over the New Testament canon, the major writings were accepted by almost all Christians by the middle of the third century.<sup>[18]</sup>

## Alexandrian Fathers

[\[edit\]](#)

In his Easter letter of 367, [Athanasius](#), Bishop of Alexandria, gave a list of exactly the same books as what would become the [New Testament](#) canon,<sup>[19]</sup> and he used the phrase "being canonized" (*kanonizomena*) in regards to them.<sup>[20]</sup>

## Latin Fathers

[edit]

The African [Synod of Hippo](#), in 393, approved the New Testament, as it stands today, together with the Septuagint books, a decision that was repeated by [Councils of Carthage](#) in 397 and 419. These councils were under the authority of [St. Augustine](#), who regarded the canon as already closed.<sup>[21]</sup> [Pope Damasus I's Council of Rome](#) in 382, if the *Decretum Gelasianum* is correctly associated with it, issued a biblical canon identical to that mentioned above,<sup>[19]</sup> or if not the list is at least a sixth century compilation.<sup>[22]</sup> Likewise, Damasus's commissioning of the Latin Vulgate edition of the Bible, c. 383, was instrumental in the fixation of the canon in the West.<sup>[23]</sup> In 405, [Pope Innocent I](#) sent a list of the sacred books to a Gallic bishop, [Exsuperius of Toulouse](#). When these bishops and councils spoke on the matter, however, they were not defining something new, but instead "were ratifying what had already become the mind of the Church."<sup>[24]</sup> Thus, from the fourth century, there existed unanimity in the West concerning the New Testament canon (as it is today),<sup>[25]</sup> and by the fifth century the East, with a few exceptions, had come to accept the Book of Revelation and thus had come into harmony on the matter of the canon.<sup>[26]</sup>

## Luther

[edit]

Main article: [Lutheran canon](#)

Luther made an attempt to remove the books of Hebrews, James, Jude and Revelation from the canon (echoing the consensus of several Catholics, also labeled *Christian Humanists* — such as [Cardinal Ximenez](#), [Cardinal Cajetan](#), and [Erasmus](#) — and partially because they were perceived to go against certain Protestant doctrines such as [sola gratia](#) and [sola fide](#)), but this was not generally accepted among his followers. However, these books are ordered last in the [German-language Luther Bible](#) to this day.<sup>[27]</sup>

## Closing of the canons

[edit]

Nonetheless, full dogmatic articulations of the canon were not made until the [Council of Trent](#) of 1546 for Roman Catholicism,<sup>[2]</sup> the [Thirty-Nine Articles](#) of 1563 for the [Church of England](#), the [Westminster Confession of Faith](#) of 1647 for British [Calvinism](#), and the [Synod of Jerusalem](#) of 1672 for the [Greek Orthodox](#).

Orthodox (Haredi · Hasidic · Modern)
Conservative · Reform
Reconstructionist · Renewal · Humanistic
Rabbinic · Karaite
<b>Jewish philosophy</b>
Principles of faith · Kabbalah · Messiah · Ethics
Chosenness · Names of God · Mussar
<b>Religious texts</b>
Tanakh (Torah · Nevi'im · Ketuvim)
Humash · Siddur · Flyutim · Zohar
Rabbinic literature (Talmud · Midrash · Tosefta)
<b>Religious Law</b>
Mshneh Torah · Tur
Shulchan Aruch · Mshnah Berurah
Kashrut · Tzniut · Tzedakah · Noahide laws
<b>Holy cities</b>
Jerusalem · Safed · Hebron · Tiberias
<b>Important figures</b>
Abraham · Isaac · Jacob
Moses · Aaron · David · Solomon
Sarah · Rebecca · Rachel · Leah
Rabbinic sages
<b>Jewish life cycle</b>
Brit · Pidyon haben · Bar/Bat Mitzvah · Marriage
Niddah · Bereavement
<b>Religious roles</b>
Rabbi · Rebbe · Posek · Hazzan/Cantor
Dayan · Rosh yeshiva · Mohel · Kohen/Priest
<b>Religious buildings &amp; institutions</b>
Synagogue · Beth midrash · Mikveh
Sukkah · Chevra kadisha
Holy Temple / Tabernacle
<b>Jewish education</b>
Yeshiva · Kollel · Cheder
<b>Religious articles</b>
Sefer Torah · Tallit · Tefillin · Tzitzit · Kippah
Mezuzah · Hanukiah/Menorah · Shofar
4 Species · Kittel · Gartel
<b>Jewish prayers and services</b>
Shema · Amidah · Aleinu · Kaddish · Mnyan
Birkat Hamazon · Shehecheyanu · Hallel
Havdalah · Tachanun · Kol Nidre · Selichot
<b>Judaism &amp; other religions</b>
Christianity · Islam · Judeo-Christian
Abrahamic faiths · Pluralism · Others
<b>Related topics</b>
Antisemitism · Zionism · Holocaust
v · d · e

<div> <div>Part of a series on</div> <div><b>Christianity</b></div> <div></div> </div> <div></div>	<div><span>[hide]</span></div>
<b>Jesus Christ</b>	
<div> <div>Virgin birth</div> <div>Crucifixion</div> <div>Resurrection</div> <div>Easter</div> <div>Christian views of Jesus</div> </div>	
<b>Foundations</b>	
<div> <div>Church</div> <div>New Covenant</div> <div>Apostles</div> <div>Kingdom</div> <div>Gospel</div> <div>Timeline</div> <div>Paul</div> <div>Peter</div> </div>	
<b>Bible</b>	
<div> <div>Old Testament</div> <div>New Testament</div> <div>Books</div> <div><b>Canon</b></div> <div>Apocrypha</div> </div>	
<b>Theology</b>	
<div> <div>Salvation</div> <div>Baptism</div> <div>Trinity</div> <div>Father</div> <div>Son</div> <div>Holy Spirit</div> <div>History of theology</div> <div>Christology</div> <div>Mariology</div> <div>Apologetics</div> <div>Eschatology</div> </div>	
<b>History and traditions</b>	
<div> <div>Early</div> <div>Constantine</div> <div>Councils</div> <div>Creeds</div> <div>Missions</div> <div>Chrysostom</div> <div>East-West Schism</div> <div>Crusades</div> <div>Reformation</div> <div>Counter-Reformation</div> </div>	
<b>Movements</b>	



Modern interpretation

[edit]

Ethiopian and Syriac Churches

[edit]

Some Christian groups do not accept the theory that the Christian Bible was not known until various local and [Ecumenical Councils](#), which they deem to be "Roman-dominated",<sup>[*citation needed*]</sup> made their official declarations. For example, the Ethiopian and Syriac Christian churches which did not participate in these councils developed their own Biblical traditions. These groups believe that, in spite of the disagreements about certain books in early Christianity and, indeed, still today, the New Testament supports the view that Paul (2 Timothy 4:11–13), Peter (2 Peter 3:15–16, although it seems that not all the Syriac Church Fathers accepted this book itself as canonical,<sup>[29]</sup> and indeed it appears the Syriac Bible initially lacked all of the [Catholic epistles](#) as well as John's Revelation), and ultimately John (Revelation 22:18–19, but see the previous note) finalized the canon of the New Testament. Some note that Peter, John, and Paul wrote 20 (or 21) of the 27 books of the NT and personally knew all the other NT writers. (The books which are attributed to authors other than these three are: Matthew, Mark, Luke, Acts, James, and Jude. The authorship of Hebrews has long been disputed.)

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Preaching · Prayer · Ecumenism · Relation to other religions · Christian movements · Music · Liturgy · Calendar · Symbols · Art · Criticism

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This box: view · talk · edit

Evangelical Protestant view

[edit]

Evangelicals tend not to accept the [Septuagint](#) as the inspired Hebrew Bible, though many recognize its wide use by Greek-speaking Jews in the first century. They note that early Christians evidenced a knowledge of a canon of Scripture, based upon internal evidence, as well as by the existence of a list of Old Testament books by [Melito of Sardis](#), compiled around 170 A.D (see [Melito's canon](#)).

- Many modern Protestants point to the following four "Criteria for Canonicity" to justify the selection of the books that have been included in the New Testament:
1. Apostolic Origin — attributed to and based upon the preaching/teaching of the first-generation apostles (or their close companions).

2. Universal Acceptance — acknowledged by all major Christian communities in the ancient world (by the end of the fourth century).

3. Liturgical Use — read publicly when early Christian communities gathered for the Lord's Supper (their weekly worship services).

4. Consistent Message — containing a theological outlook similar to or complementary to other accepted Christian writings.

The basic factor for recognizing a book's canonicity for the New Testament was divine inspiration, and the chief test for this was apostolicity. The term *apostolic* as used for the test of canonicity does not necessarily mean apostolic authorship or derivation, but rather *apostolic authority*. According to these Protestants, *apostolic authority* is never detached from the authority of the Lord.<sup>[*citation needed*]</sup> See [Apostolic succession](#).

See also

[edit]

Books of the Bible

for a side-by-side comparison of Jewish, Catholic, Orthodox and Protestant canons.

Table of books of Judeo-Christian Scripture

Deuterocanonical books

Non-canonical books referenced in the Bible

Standard Works

- several books (including the Bible) that constitute the [open](#) scriptural canon of [The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints](#) (LDS Church)

Canon (fiction)

- a concept inspired by Biblical canon

Bible portal

Footnotes

[edit]

1.

<sup>↑</sup> McDonald & Sanders, editors of *The Canon Debate*, 2002, *The Notion and Definition of Canon* by Eugene Ulrich, page 29 defines *canon* as follows: "...the definitive list of inspired, authoritative books which constitute the recognized and accepted body of sacred scripture of a major religious group, that definitive list being the result of inclusive and exclusive decisions after serious deliberation."; page 34 defines *canon of scripture* as follows: "...the definitive, closed list of the books that constitute the authentic contents of scripture."

2.

<sup>↑</sup> McDonald & Sanders, editors of *The Canon Debate*, 2002, *The Notion and Definition of Canon* by Eugene Ulrich, page 28; also from the *Introduction* on page 13: "We should be clear, however, that the current use of the term "canon" to refer to a collection of scripture books was introduced by David Ruhnken in 1768 in his *Historia critica oratorum graecorum* for lists of sacred scriptures. While it is tempting to think that such usage has its origins in antiquity in reference to a closed collection of scriptures, such is not the case." The technical discussion includes Athanasius's use of "kanonizomenon=canonized" and Eusebius's use of *kanon* and "endiathekos biblous=encovenanted books".

3.

<sup>↑</sup> *Athanasius Letter 39* .6.3: "Let no man add to these, neither let him take ought from these."

4.

<sup>↑</sup> McDonald & Sanders, page 32-33: *Closed list*, page 30: "But it is necessary to keep in mind [Bruce Metzger](#)'s distinction between "a collection of authoritative books" and "an authoritative collection of books." "

5.

<sup>↑</sup> McDonald & Sanders, page 4

6.

<sup>↑</sup> McDonald & Sanders, ed., *The Canon Debate*, page 60, chapter 4: *The Formation of the Hebrew Canon: Isaiah as a Test Case* by Joseph Blenkinsopp.

7.

<sup>↑</sup> Philip R. Davies in *The Canon Debate*, page 50: "With many other scholars, I conclude that the fixing of a canonical list was almost certainly the achievement of the Hasmonean dynasty."

8.

<sup>↑</sup> *The Canon Debate*, McDonald & Sanders editors, 2002, chapter 6: *Questions of Canon through the Dead Sea Scrolls* by James C. VanderKam, page 94, citing private communication with Emanuel Tov on *biblical manuscripts*: Qumran scribe type c.25%, proto-Masoretic Text c. 40%, pre-Samaritan texts c.5%, texts close to the Hebrew model for the Septuagint c.5% and nonaligned c.25%.

9.

<sup>↑</sup> *Jewish Encyclopedia: Samaritans*

10.

<sup>↑</sup> *Jewish Encyclopedia: Sadducees* : "With the destruction of the Temple and the state the Sadducees as a party no longer had an object for which to live. They disappear from history, though their views are partly maintained and echoed by the Samaritans, with whom they are frequently identified (see Hippolytus, "Refutatio Hæresium" ix. 29; Epiphanius, l.c. xiv.; and other Church Fathers, who ascribe to the Sadducees the rejection of the Prophets and the Haglographa; comp. also Sanh. 90b, where "Zaddukim" stands for "Kutirî" [Samaritans]; Sifre, Num. 112; Geiger, l.c. pp. 128-129), and by the Karaites (see Maimonides, commentary on Ab. i. 3; Geiger, "Gesammelte Schriften," iii. 283-321; also Anan ben David; Karaites)."

11.

<sup>↑</sup> *JewishEncyclopedia.com- SAMARITANS*

12.

<sup>↑</sup> McDonald & Sanders's 2002 *The Canon Debate*, page 259: "the so-called Septuagint was not in itself formally closed." — attributed to Albert Sundberg's 1964 Harvard dissertation.

13.

<sup>↑</sup> Everett Ferguson, "Factors leading to the Selection and Oclsure of the New Testament Canon," in *The Canon Debate*. eds. L. M. McDonald & J. A. Sanders (Hendrickson, 2002) pp. 302–303; cf. Justin Martyr, *First Apology* 67.3.

14.

<sup>↑</sup> Pratz, Ferdinand. "Origen and Origenism." The Catholic Encyclopedia. Vol. 11. New York: Robert Appleton Company, 1911. 31 Jul. 2008.<<http://www.newadvent.org/cathen/11306b.htm> >. According to *Eusebius' Church History* 6.25 : a 22 book OT [though Eusebius doesn't name Minor Prophets, presumably just an oversight?]+ 1 DeuteroCanon ["And outside these are the *Maccabees*, which are entitled Sph?>ar beth sabanai el."]+ 4 Gospels but on the Apostle "Paul ... did not so much as write to all the churches that he taught; and even to those to which he wrote he sent but a few lines."

15.

<sup>↑</sup> Everett Ferguson, "Factors leading to the Selection and Closure of the New Testament Canon," in *The Canon Debate*. eds. L. M. McDonald & J. A. Sanders (Hendrickson, 2002) pp. 301; cf. Irenaeus, *Adversus Haereses* 3.11.8

16.

<sup>↑</sup> Both points taken from Mark A. Noll's *Turning Points*, (Baker Academic, 1997) pp 36–37

17.

<sup>↑</sup> H. J. De Jonge, "The New Testament Canon," in *The Biblical Canons*. eds. de Jonge & J. M. Auwers (Leuven University Press, 2003) p. 315

18.

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19.

<sup>↑</sup> ^ b Lindberg, Carter (2006). *A Brief History of Christianity*. Blackwell Publishing. pp. 15. ISBN 1405110783.

20.

<sup>↑</sup> David Brakke, "Canon Formation and Social Conflict in Fourth Century Egypt: Athanasius of Alexandria's Thirty Ninth Festal Letter," in *Harvard Theological Review* 87 (1994) pp. 395–419

21.

<sup>↑</sup> Everett Ferguson, "Factors leading to the Selection and Closure of the New Testament Canon," in *The Canon Debate*. eds. L. M. McDonald & J. A. Sanders (Hendrickson, 2002) p. 320; F. F. Bruce, *The Canon of Scripture* (Intervarsity Press, 1988) p. 230; cf. Augustine, *De Civitate Dei* 22.8

22.

<sup>↑</sup> F. F. Bruce, *The Canon of Scripture* (Intervarsity Press, 1988) p. 234

23.

<sup>↑</sup> F. F. Bruce, *The Canon of Scripture* (Intervarsity Press, 1988) p. 225

24.

<sup>↑</sup> Everett Ferguson, "Factors leading to the Selection and Closure of the New Testament Canon," in *The Canon Debate*. eds. L. M. McDonald & J. A. Sanders (Hendrickson, 2002) p. 320; Bruce Metzger, *The Canon of the New Testament: Its Origins, Development, and Significance* (Oxford: Clarendon, 1987) pp. 237–238; F. F. Bruce, *The Canon of Scripture* (Intervarsity Press, 1988) p. 97

25.

<sup>↑</sup> F. F. Bruce, *The Canon of Scripture* (Intervarsity Press, 1988) p. 215

26.

<sup>↑</sup> *The Cambridge History of the Bible* (volume 1) eds. P. R. Ackroyd and C. F. Evans (Cambridge University Press, 1970) p. 305; cf. the Catholic Encyclopedia, *Canon of the New Testament*

27.

<sup>↑</sup> <http://www.bibelcenter.de/bibel/lu1545/> note order: ... Hebrⴊ, Jakobus, Judas, Offenbarung; see also <http://www.bible-researcher.com/links10.html>

28.

<sup>↑</sup> Catholic Encyclopedia, *Canon of the New Testament*

29.

<sup>↑</sup> Thomas Nicol, <http://www.bible-researcher.com/syriac-isbe.html> , retrieved 12/16/2009

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26



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## External links

[edit]

- [Old Testament Reading Room](#) & [New Testament Reading Room](#) : Extensive links to online resources for OT and NT theology & history (Tyndale Seminary)
- [The Development of the Canon of the New Testament](#) - includes very detailed charts and direct links to ancient witnesses
- [Catholic Encyclopedia: Canon of the New Testament](#)
- [Scholarly articles on the Protestant Biblical Canon from the Wisconsin Lutheran Seminary Library](#)
- [Jewish Encyclopedia: Bible Canon](#)
- [What's in Your Bible?](#) - a chart comparing Jewish, Orthodox, Catholic, Syriac, Ethiopian, and Protestant canons (Bible Study Magazine Nov-Dec 08.)

<div><span><span></span></span><span> </span><span>v</span><span> </span><span>•</span><span> </span><span>d</span><span> </span><span>•</span><span> </span><span>e</span></div>	<div>Part of a series on the Biblical canon</div> <div><span>[hide]</span></div>
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<div><span><span></span></span><span> </span><span>v</span><span> </span><span>•</span><span> </span><span>d</span><span> </span><span>•</span><span> </span><span>e</span></div>	<div>Books of the Bible</div> <div><span>[show]</span></div>
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# Canons and Decrees of the Council of Trent

## The Fourth Session

*Celebrated on the eighth day of the month of April, in the year 1546.*

Papal Arms

### Decree Concerning the Canonical Scriptures

The sacred and holy, ecumenical, and general Synod of Trent, —lawfully assembled in the Holy Ghost, the Same three legates of the Apostolic See presiding therein, — keeping this always in view, that, errors being removed, the purity itself of the Gospel be preserved in the Church; which (Gospel), before promised through the prophets in the holy Scriptures, our Lord Jesus Christ, the Son of God, first promulgated with His own mouth, and then commanded to be preached by His Apostles to every creature, as the fountain of all, both saving truth, and moral discipline; and seeing clearly that this truth and discipline are contained in the written books, and the unwritten traditions which, received by the Apostles from the mouth of Christ himself, or from the Apostles themselves, the Holy Ghost dictating, have come down even unto us, transmitted as it were from hand to hand; (the Synod) following the examples of the orthodox Fathers, receives and venerates with an equal affection of piety, and reverence, all the books both of the Old and of the New Testament—seeing that one God is the author of both —as also the said traditions, as well those appertaining to faith as to morals, as having been dictated, either by Christ's own word of mouth, or by the Holy Ghost, and preserved in the Catholic Church by a continuous succession.

And it has thought it meet that a list of the sacred books be inserted in this decree, lest a doubt may arise in any one's mind, which are the books that are received by this Synod. They are as set down here below:

Of the Old Testament: the five books of Moses, to wit, Genesis, Exodus, Leviticus, Numbers, Deuteronomy; Josue, Judges, Ruth, four books of Kings, two of Paralipomenon, the first book of Esdras, and the second which is entitled Nehemias; Tobias, Judith, Esther, Job, the Davidical Psalter, consisting of a hundred and fifty psalms; the Proverbs, Ecclesiastes, the Canticle of Canticles, Wisdom, Ecclesiasticus, Isaia, Jeremias, with Baruch; Ezechiel, Daniel; the twelve minor prophets, to wit, Osee, Joel, Amos, Abdias, Jonas, Micheas, Nahum, Habacuc, Sophonias, Aggaeus, Zacharias, Malachias; two books of the Machabees, the first and the second.

Of the New Testament: the four Gospels, according to Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John; the Acts of the Apostles written by Luke the Evangelist; fourteen epistles of Paul the apostle, (one) to the Romans, two to the Corinthians, (one) to the Galatians, to the Ephesians, to the Philippians, to the Colossians, two to the Thessalonians, two to Timothy, (one) to Titus, to Philemon, to the Hebrews; two of Peter the apostle, three of John the apostle, one of the apostle James, one of Jude the apostle, and the Apocalypse of John the apostle.

But if any one receive not, as sacred and canonical, the said books entire with all their parts, as they have been used to be read in the Catholic Church, and as they are contained in the old Latin vulgate edition; and knowingly and deliberately contemn the traditions aforesaid; let him be anathema. Let all, therefore, understand, in what order, and in what manner, the said Synod, after having laid the foundation of the Confession of faith, will proceed, and what testimonies and authorities it will mainly use in confirming dogmas, and in restoring morals in the Church.

### Decree Concerning the Edition and the Use of the Sacred Books

Moreover, the same sacred and holy Synod, —considering that no small utility may accrue to the Church of God, if it be made known which out of all the Latin

### Decretum de Canonicis Scripturis

Sacrosancta oecumenica et generalis Tridentina Synodus, in Spiritu Sancto legitime congregata, praesidentibus in ea eisdem tribus Apostolicae Sedis Legatis, hoc sibi perpetuo ante oculos proponens, ut sublatis erroribus, puritas ipsa Evangelii in Ecclesia conservetur: quod promissum ante per Prophetas in Scripturis Sanctis, Dominus noster Iesus Christus, Dei Filius, proprio ore primum promulgavit, deinde per suos Apostolos, tamquam fontem omnis et salutaris veritatis et morum disciplinae, omni creaturae praedicari iussit: perspiciciensque hanc veritatem et disciplinam contineri in libris scriptis et sine scripto traditionibus, quae ab ipsius Christi ore ab Apostolis acceptae, aut ab ipsis Apostolis Spiritu Sancto dictante, quasi per manus traditae, ad nos usque pervenerunt: orthodoxorum Patrum exempla secuta, omnes libros tam Veteris quam Novi Testamenti, cum utriusque unus Deus sit auctor, nec non traditiones ipsas, tum ad fidem, tum ad mores pertinentes, tamquam vel oretenus a Christo, vel a Spiritu Sancto dictatas, et continua successione in Ecclesia catholica conservatas, pari pietatis affectu ac reverentia suscipit ac veneratur.

Sacrorum vero Librorum indicem huic decreto adscribendum censuit, ne cui dubitatio suboriri possit, quinam sint, qui ab ipsa Synodo suscipiuntur. Sunt vero infrascripti.

Testamenti Veteris: Quinque Moysis, id est Genesis, Exodus, Leviticus, Numeri, Deuteronomium; Iosue, Iudicum, Ruth, quattuor Regum, duo Paralipomenon, Esdrae primus et secundus, qui dicitur Nehemias, Tobias, Iudith, Esther, Iob, Psalterium Davidicum centum quinquaginta psalmorum, Parabolae, Ecclesiastes, Canticum Cantorum, Sapientia, Ecclesiasticus, Isaia, Ieremias cum Baruch, Ezechiel, Daniel, duodecim prophetae minores, id est: Osea, Ioel, Amos, Abdias, Ionas, Michaeas, Nahum, Habacuc, Sophonias, Aggaeus, Zacharias, Malachias; duo Maccabaeorum, primus et secundus.

Testamenti Novi: Quattuor Evangelia, secundum Matthaeum, Marcum, Lucam, Ioannem; Actus Apostolorum a Luca Evangelista conscripti; quattuordecim epistolae Pauli Apostoli: ad Romanos, duae ad Corinthios, ad Galatas, ad Ephesios, ad Philippenses, ad Colossenses, duae ad Thessalonicenses, duae ad Timotheum, ad Titum, ad Philemonem, ad Hebraeos; Petri Apostoli duae; Ioannis Apostoli tres; Iacobi Apostoli una; Iudae Apostoli una et Apocalypsis Ioannis Apostoli.

Si quis autem libros ipsos integros cum omnibus suis partibus, prout in Ecclesia catholica legi consueverunt, et in veteri vulgata latina editione habentur, pro sacris et canonicis non susceperit, et traditiones praedictas sciens et prudens contempserit, anathema sit.

### Decretum de Editione et Usu Sacrorum Librorum

Insuper eadem sacrosancta Synodus, considerans non parum utilitatis accedere posse Ecclesiae Dei, si ex omnibus latinis



editions, now in circulation, of the sacred books, is to be held as authentic, —ordains and declares, that the said old and vulgate edition, which, by the lengthened usage of so many years, has been approved of in the Church, be, in public lectures, disputations, sermons and expositions, held as authentic; and that no one is to dare, or presume to reject it under any pretext whatever.

Furthermore, in order to restrain petulant spirits, It decrees, that no one, relying on his own skill, shall, —in matters of faith, and of morals pertaining to the edification of Christian doctrine, —wresting the sacred Scripture to his own senses, presume to interpret the said sacred Scripture contrary to that sense which holy mother Church, —whose it is to judge of the true sense and interpretation of the holy Scriptures, —hath held and doth hold; or even contrary to the unanimous consent of the Fathers; even though such interpretations were never (intended) to be at any time published. Contraveners shall be made known by their Ordinaries, and be punished with the penalties by law established.

And wishing, as is just, to impose a restraint, in this matter, also on printers, who now without restraint, —thinking, that is, that whatsoever they please is allowed them, —print, without the license of ecclesiastical superiors, the said books of sacred Scripture, and the notes and comments upon them of all persons indifferently, with the press oftentimes unnamed, often even fictitious, and what is more grievous still, without the author's name; and also keep for indiscriminate sale books of this kind printed elsewhere; (this Synod) ordains and decrees, that, henceforth, the sacred Scripture, and especially the said old and vulgate edition, be printed in the most correct manner possible; and that it shall not be lawful for any one to print, or cause to be printed, any books whatever, on sacred matters, without the name of the author; nor to sell them in future, or even to keep them, unless they shall have been first examined, and approved of, by the Ordinary; under pain of the anathema and fine imposed in a canon of the last Council of Lateran: and, if they be Regulars, besides this examination and approval, they shall be bound to obtain a license also from their own superiors, who shall have examined the books according to the form of their own statutes. As to those who lend, or circulate them in manuscript, without their having been first examined, and approved of, they shall be subjected to the same penalties as printers: and they who shall have them in their possession or shall read them, shall, unless they discover the authors, be themselves regarded as the authors. And the said approbation of books of this kind shall be given in writing; and for this end it shall appear authentically at the beginning of the book, whether the book be written, or printed; and all this, that is, both the approbation and the examination, shall be done gratis, that so what ought to be approved, may be approved, and what ought to be condemned, may be condemned.

Besides the above, wishing to repress that temerity, by which the words and sentences of sacred Scripture are turned and twisted to all sorts of profane uses, to wit, to things scurrilous, fabulous, vain, to flatteries, detractions, superstitions, impious and diabolical incantations, sorceries, and defamatory libels; (the Synod) commands and enjoins, for the doing away with this kind of irreverence and contempt, and that no one may hence forth dare in any way to apply the words of sacred Scripture to these and such like purposes; that all men of this description, profaners and violators of the word of God, be by the bishops restrained by the penalties of law, and others of their own appointment.

editionibus, quae circumferuntur sacrorum librorum, quatenus pro authentica habenda sit, innotescat: statuit et declarat, ut haec ipsa vetus et vulgata editio, quae longo tot saeculorum usu in ipsa Ecclesia probata est, in publicis lectionibus, disputationibus, praedicationibus et expositionibus pro authentica habeatur, ut nemo illam reiicere quovis praetextu audeat vel praesumat.

Praeterea ad coercenda petulantia ingenia decernit, ut nemo, suae prudentiae innixus, in rebus fidei et morum ad aedificationem doctrinae Christianae pertinentium, Sacram Scripturam ad suos sensus contorquens, contra eum sensum, quem tenuit et tenet sancta mater Ecclesia, cuius est iudicare de vero sensu et interpretatione Scripturarum Sanctorum, aut etiam contra unanimem consensum Patrum, ipsam Scripturam Sacram interpretari audeat, etiamsi huiusmodi interpretationes nullo umquam tempore in lucem edendae forent. Qui contravenerint, per Ordinarios declarentur, et poenis a iure statutis puniantur.

Sed et impressoribus modum in hac parte, ut par est, imponere volens, qui iam sine modo, hoc est putantes sibi licere, quidquid libet, sine licentia superiorum ecclesiasticorum, ipsos Sacrae Scripturae libros, et super illis annotationes et expositiones quorumlibet indifferenter, saepe tacito, saepe etiam ementito prelo, et quod gravius est, sine nomine auctoris imprimunt, alibi etiam impressos libros huiusmodi temere venales habent: decernit et statuit, ut posthac Sacra Scriptura, potissimum vero haec ipsa vetus et vulgata editio, quam emendatissime imprimatur, nullique liceat imprimere, vel imprimi facere, quosvis libros de rebus sacris sine nomine auctoris, neque illos in futurum vendere, aut etiam apud se retinere, nisi primum examinati probatique fuerint ab Ordinario, sub poena anathematis et pecuniae in canone Concilii novissimi Lateranensis apposita. Et si regulares fuerint, ultra examinationem et probationem huiusmodi, licentiam quoque a suis superioribus impetrare teneantur, recognitis per eos libris, iuxta formam suarum ordinationum. Qui autem scripto eos communicant, vel evulgant, nisi antea examinati probatique fuerint, eisdem poenis subiaceant, quibus impressores. Et qui eos habuerint vel legerint, nisi prodiderint auctorem, pro auctoribus habeantur. Ipsa vero huiusmodi librorum probatio in scriptis detur, atque ideo in fronte libri vel scripti vel impressi authentice appareat; idque totum, hoc est, et probatio et examen, gratis fiat, ut probanda probentur et reprobentur improbanda.

Post haec temeritatem illam reprimere volens, qua ad profana quaeque convertuntur et torquentur verba et sententiae Sacrae Scripturae, ad scurrilia scilicet, fabulosa, vana, adulationes, detractiones, superstitiones, impias et diabolicas incantationes, divinationes, sortes, libellos etiam famosos, mandat et praecipit, ad tollendam huiusmodi irreverentiam et contemptum, et ne de cetero quisquam quomodolibet verba Scripturae Sacrae ad haec et similia audeat usurpare, ut omnes huius generis homines, temeratores et violatores verbi Dei, iuris et arbitrii poenis per Episcopos coerceantur.



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The **Catholic New Testament**, as defined by the **Council of Trent**, does not differ, as regards the books contained, from that of all **Christian** bodies at present. Like the **Old Testament**, the New has its *deuterocanonical* books and portions of books, their canonicity having formerly been a subject of some controversy in the **Church**. These are for the entire books: the Epistle to the Hebrews, that of James, the Second of St. Peter, the Second and Third of John, Jude, and Apocalypse; giving seven in all as the number of the **New Testament** contested books. The formerly disputed passages are three: the closing section of St. Mark's Gospel, xvi, 9-20 about the apparitions of Christ after the **Resurrection**; the verses in Luke about the bloody sweat of **Jesus** (22:43-44); the *Pericope Adulteræ*, or narrative of the **woman** taken in **adultery** (John 7:53-8:11). Since the **Council of Trent** it is not permitted for a **Catholic** to question the inspiration of these passages.

### The formation of the New Testament canon (A.D. 100-220)

The **idea** of a complete and clear-cut canon of the **New Testament** existing from the beginning, that is from Apostolic times, has no foundation in history. The Canon of the New Testament, like that of the Old, is the result of a development, of a process at once stimulated by disputes with doubters, both within and without the **Church**, and retarded by certain obscurities and natural hesitations, and which did not reach its final term until the **dogmatic definition** of the **Tridentine Council**.

#### The witness of the New Testament to itself: The first collections

Those writings which possessed the unmistakable stamp and guarantee of Apostolic origin must from the very first have been specially prized and **venerated**, and their copies eagerly sought by local Churches and individual **Christians** of means, in preference to the narratives and *Logia*, or Sayings of **Christ**, coming from less authorized sources. Already in the **New Testament** itself there is some evidence of a certain diffusion of canonical books: II Peter, iii, 15, 16, supposes its readers to be acquainted with some of **St. Paul's Epistles**; St. John's Gospel implicitly presupposes the existence of the **Synoptics** (Matthew, Mark, and Luke). There are no indications in the **New Testament** of a systematic plan for the distribution of the Apostolic compositions, any more than there is of a definite new Canon bequeathed by the **Apostles** to the **Church**, or of a strong self-witness to **Divine inspiration**. Nearly all the **New Testament** writings were evoked by particular occasions, or addressed to particular destinations. But we may well presume that each of the leading **Churches--Antioch, Thessalonica, Alexandria, Corinth, Rome--**sought by exchanging with other **Christian** communities to add to its special treasure, and have publicly read in its religious assemblies all Apostolic writings which came under its **knowledge**. It was doubtless in this way that the collections grew, and reached completeness within certain limits, but a considerable number of years must have elapsed (and that counting from the composition of the latest book) before all the widely separated Churches of early **Christendom** possessed the new sacred literature in full. And this want of an organized distribution, secondarily to the absence of an early fixation of the Canon, left room for variations and **doubts** which lasted far into the centuries. But evidence will presently be given that from days touching on those of the last Apostles there were two well defined bodies of sacred writings of the **New Testament**, which constituted the firm, irreducible, universal minimum, and the nucleus of its complete Canon: these were the **Four Gospels**, as the **Church** now has them, and thirteen **Epistles** of **St. Paul**--the *Evangelium* and the *Apostolicum*.

#### The principle of canonicity

Before entering into the historical **proof** for this primitive emergence of a compact, nucleative Canon, it is pertinent to briefly examine this problem: During the formative period what principle operated in the selection of the **New Testament** writings and their recognition as Divine?--**Theologians** are divided on this point. This view that Apostolicity was the test of the inspiration during the building up of the New Testament canon, is favoured by the many instances where the early **Fathers** base the authority of a book on its Apostolic origin, and by the **truth** that the definitive placing of the contested books on the **New Testament** catalogue coincided with their general acceptance as of Apostolic authorship. Moreover, the advocates of this hypothesis point out that the Apostles' office corresponded with that of the Prophets of the **Old Law**, inferring that as inspiration was attached to the *munus propheticum* so the Apostles were aided by **Divine inspiration** whenever in the exercise of their calling they either spoke or wrote. Positive arguments are **deduced** from the **New Testament** to establish that a permanent prophetic *charisma* (see **CHARISMATA**) was enjoyed by the **Apostles** through a special indwelling of the Holy Ghost, beginning with Pentecost: **Matthew 10:19-20**; **Acts 15:28**; **1 Corinthians 2:13**; **2 Corinthians 13:3**; **1 Thessalonians 2:13**, are cited. The opponents of this theory allege against it that the Gospels of Mark and of Luke and Acts were not the work of Apostles (however, tradition connects the Second Gospel with St. Peter's preaching and St. Luke's with **St. Paul's**); that books current under an Apostle's name in the Early Church, such as the Epistle of Barnabas and the Apocalypse of St. Peter, were nevertheless excluded from canonical rank, while on the other hand **Origen** and **St. Dionysius of Alexandria** in the case of Apocalypse, and **St. Jerome** in the case of II and III John, although questioning the Apostolic authorship of these works, unhesitatingly received them as **Sacred Scriptures**. An objection of a speculative kind is derived from the very nature of inspiration *ad scribendum*, which seems to demand a specific impulse from the Holy Ghost in each case, and preclude the theory that it could be possessed as a permanent gift, or *charisma*. The weight of **Catholic theological** opinion is deservedly against mere Apostolicity as a sufficient criterion of inspiration. The adverse view has been taken by **Franzelin** (*De Divinâ Traditione et Scripturâ*, 1882), **Schmid** (*De Inspirationis Bibliorum Vi et Ratione*, 1885), **Crets** (*De Divinâ Bibliorum Inspiratione*, 1886), **Leitner** (*Die prophetische Inspiration*, 1895--a monograph), **Pesch** (*De Inspiratione Sacræ*, 1906). These authors (some of whom treat the matter more speculatively than historically) admit that Apostolicity is a positive and partial touchstone of inspiration, but emphatically deny that it was exclusive, in the sense that all non-Apostolic works were by that very fact barred from the sacred Canon of the New Testament. They hold to **doctrinal** tradition as the **true** criterion.

**Catholic** champions of Apostolicity as a criterion are: Ubaldo (*Introductio in Sacram Scripturam*, II, 1876); Schanz (*In Theologische Quartalschrift*, 1885, pp. 666 sqq., and *A Christian Apology*, II, tr. 1891); Székely (*Hermeneutica Biblica*, 1902). Recently Professor Batiffol, while rejecting the claims of these latter advocates, has enunciated a theory regarding the principle that presided over the formation of the New Testament canon which challenges



attention and perhaps marks a new stage in the controversy. According to Monsignor Batiffol, the *Gospel* (i.e. the words and commandments of [Jesus Christ](#)) bore with it its own sacredness and authority from the very beginning. This Gospel was announced to the world at large, by the [Apostles](#) and Apostolic disciples of [Christ](#), and this message, whether spoken or written, whether taking the form of an evangelic narrative or epistle, was holy and supreme by the fact of containing the Word of [Our Lord](#). Accordingly, for the primitive Church, *evangelical character* was the test of Scriptural sacredness. But to guarantee this character it was [necessary](#) that a book should be known as composed by the official witnesses and organs of the Evangel; hence the need to certify the Apostolic authorship, or at least sanction, of a work purporting to contain the Gospel of Christ. In Batiffol's view the Judaic notion of inspiration did not at first enter into the selection of the [Christian Scriptures](#). In fact, for the earliest [Christians](#) the Gospel of [Christ](#), in the wide sense above noted, was not to be classified with, because transcending, the [Old Testament](#). It was not until about the middle of the second century that under the [rubric](#) of *Scripture* the [New Testament](#) writings were assimilated to the Old; the authority of the [New Testament](#) as the Word preceded and produced its authority as a New Scripture. (Revue Biblique, 1903, 226 sqq.) Monsignor Batiffol's hypothesis has this in common with the views of other recent students of the New Testament canon, that the [idea](#) of a new body of sacred writings became clearer in the Early Church as the faithful advanced in a [knowledge](#) of the Faith. But it should be remembered that the inspired character of the [New Testament](#) is a [Catholic dogma](#), and must therefore in some way have been revealed to, and taught by, Apostles.--Assuming that Apostolic authorship is a positive criterion of inspiration, two inspired [Epistles](#) of [St. Paul](#) have been lost. This appears from [1 Corinthians 5:9, sqq.](#); [2 Corinthians 2:4-5](#).

### ***The formation of the Tetramorph, or Fourfold Gospel***

[Irenæus](#), in his work "Against Heresies" (A.D. 182-88), testifies to the existence of a *Tetramorph*, or Quadriform Gospel, given by the Word and unified by one Spirit; to repudiate this Gospel or any part of it, as did the [Alogi](#) and [Marcionites](#), was to [sin](#) against revelation and the [Spirit of God](#). The saintly Doctor of [Lyons](#) explicitly states the names of the four Elements of this Gospel, and repeatedly cites all the [Evangelists](#) in a manner parallel to his citations from the [Old Testament](#). From the testimony of [St. Irenæus](#) alone there can be no reasonable [doubt](#) that the Canon of the Gospel was inalterably fixed in the [Catholic Church](#) by the last quarter of the second century. Proofs might be multiplied that our canonical [Gospels](#) were then universally recognized in the [Church](#), to the exclusion of any pretended [Evangelists](#). The magisterial statement of [Irenæus](#) may be corroborated by the very ancient catalogue known as the Muratorian Canon, and [St. Hippolytus](#), representing Roman tradition; by [Tertullian](#) in [Africa](#), by [Clement](#) in [Alexandria](#); the works of the [Gnostic](#) [Valentinus](#), and the Syrian [Tatian's](#) [Diatessaron](#), a blending together of the [Evangelists'](#) writings, presuppose the authority enjoyed by the fourfold Gospel towards the middle of the second century. To this period or a little earlier belongs the pseudo-Clementine epistle in which we find, for the first time after [2 Peter 3:16](#), the word *Scripture* applied to a [New Testament](#) book. But it is needless in the present article to array the full force of these and other witnesses, since even [rationalistic](#) scholars like [Harnack](#) admit the canonicity of the quadriform Gospel between the years 140-175.

But against [Harnack](#) we are able to trace the Tetramorph as a sacred collection back to a more remote period. The [apocryphal](#) Gospel of [St. Peter](#), dating from about 150, is based on our canonical [Evangelists](#). So with the very ancient Gospel of the Hebrews and Egyptians (see [APOCRYPHA](#)). [St. Justin Martyr](#) (130-63) in his Apology refers to certain "memoirs of the Apostles, which are called gospels", and which "are read in [Christian assemblies](#) together with the writings of the Prophets". The identity of these "memoirs" with our Gospels is established by the certain traces of three, if not all, of them scattered through [St. Justin's](#) works; it was not yet the age of explicit quotations. [Marcion](#), the [heretic](#) refuted by [Justin](#) in a lost polemic, as we [know](#) from [Tertullian](#), instituted a criticism of Gospels bearing the names of the Apostles and disciples of the Apostles, and a little earlier (c. 120) [Basilides](#), the Alexandrian leader of a [Gnostic sect](#), wrote a commentary on "the Gospel" which is known by the allusions to it in the [Fathers](#) to have comprised the writings of the Four [Evangelists](#).

In our backward search we have come to the sub-Apostolic age, and its important witnesses are divided into [Asian](#), [Alexandrian](#), and [Roman](#):

- [St. Ignatius](#), [Bishop](#) of [Antioch](#), and [St. Polycarp](#), of [Smyrna](#), had been disciples of Apostles; they wrote their epistles in the first decade of the second century (100-110). They employ Matthew, Luke, and John. In [St. Ignatius](#) we find the first instance of the [consecrated](#) term "it is written" applied to a Gospel ([Ad Philad.](#), viii, 2). Both these [Fathers](#) show not only a personal acquaintance with "the Gospel" and the thirteen Pauline Epistles, but they suppose that their readers are so familiar with them that it would be superfluous to name them. [Papias](#), [Bishop](#) of Phrygian [Hierapolis](#), according to [Irenæus](#) a disciple of [St. John](#), wrote about A.D. 125. Describing the origin of [St. Mark's](#) Gospel, he speaks of Hebrew ([Aramaic](#)) [Logia](#), or Sayings of [Christ](#), composed by [St. Matthew](#), which there is reason to believe formed the basis of the canonical Gospel of that name, though the greater part of [Catholic](#) writers identify them with the Gospel. As we have only a few fragments of [Papias](#), preserved by [Eusebius](#), it cannot be alleged that he is silent about other parts of the [New Testament](#).
- The so-called [Epistle of Barnabas](#), of uncertain origin, but of highest antiquity, cites a passage from the First Gospel under the formula "it is written". The [Didache](#), or Teaching of the Apostles, an uncanonical work dating from c. 110, implies that "the Gospel" was already a well-known and definite collection.
- [St. Clement](#), [Bishop of Rome](#), and disciple of [St. Paul](#), addressed his Letter to the Corinthian Church c. A.D. 97, and, although it cites no [Evangelist](#) explicitly, this epistle contains combinations of texts taken from the three [synoptic Gospels](#), especially from [St. Matthew](#). That [Clement](#) does not allude to the [Fourth Gospel](#) is quite natural, as it was not composed till about that time.

Thus the patristic testimonies have brought us step by step to a Divine inviolable fourfold Gospel existing in the closing years of the Apostolic Era. Just how the Tetramorph was welded into unity and given to the [Church](#), is a matter of conjecture. But, as [Zahn](#) observes, there is good reason to believe that the tradition handed down by [Papias](#), of the approval of [St. Mark's](#) Gospel by [St. John the Evangelist](#), reveals that either the latter himself or a [college](#) of his disciples added the [Fourth Gospel](#) to the [Synoptics](#), and made the group into the compact and unalterable "Gospel", the one in four, whose existence and authority left their clear impress upon all subsequent [ecclesiastical](#) literature, and find their conscious formulation in the language of [Irenæus](#).

### ***The Pauline epistles***

Parallel to the chain of evidence we have traced for the canonical standing of the Gospels extends one for the thirteen [Epistles](#) of [St. Paul](#), forming the other half of the irreducible kernel of the complete New Testament canon. All the authorities cited for the Gospel Canon show acquaintance with, and recognize, the sacred quality of these letters. [St. Irenæus](#), as acknowledged by the [Harnackian](#) critics, employs all the Pauline writings, except the short [Philemon](#), as sacred and canonical. The Muratorian Canon, contemporary with [Irenæus](#), gives the complete list of the thirteen, which, it should be remembered, does not include Hebrews. The [heretical](#) [Basilides](#) and his disciples quote from this Pauline group in general. The copious extracts from [Marcion's](#) works scattered through [Irenæus](#) and [Tertullian](#) show that he was acquainted with the thirteen as in [ecclesiastical](#) use, and selected his *Apostolikon* of six from them. The testimony of [Polycarp](#) and [Ignatius](#) is again capital in this case. Eight of [St. Paul's](#) writings are cited by [Polycarp](#); [St. Ignatius of Antioch](#) ranked the Apostles above the Prophets, and must therefore have allowed the written compositions of the former at least an equal rank with those of the latter ("Ad Philadelphios", v). [St. Clement of Rome](#) refers to Corinthians as at the head "of the Evangel"; the Muratorian Canon gives the same honour to I Corinthians, so that we may rightfully draw the inference, with [Dr. Zahn](#), that as early as [Clement's](#) day [St. Paul's Epistles](#) had been collected and formed into a group with a fixed order. [Zahn](#) has pointed out confirmatory signs of this in the manner in which [Sts. Ignatius](#) and [Polycarp](#) employ these Epistles. The tendency of the evidence is to establish the hypothesis that the important Church of [Corinth](#) was the first to form a complete collection of [St. Paul's](#) writings.

### ***The remaining books***

In this formative period the Epistle to the Hebrews did not obtain a firm footing in the Canon of the Universal



Church. At [Rome](#) it was not yet recognized as canonical, as shown by the Muratorian catalogue of Roman origin; [Irenæus](#) probably cites it, but makes no reference to a Pauline origin. Yet it was known at [Rome](#) as early as St. Clement, as the latter's epistle attests. The Alexandrian Church admitted it as the work of [St. Paul](#), and canonical. The [Montanists](#) favoured it, and the aptness with which vi, 4-8, lent itself to the [Montanist](#) and [Novatianist](#) rigour was doubtless one reason why it was suspect in the West. Also during this period the excess over the minimal Canon composed of the Gospels and thirteen epistles varied. The seven "Catholic" Epistles (James, Jude, I and II Peter, and the three of John) had not yet been brought into a special group, and, with the possible exception of the three of St. John, remained isolated units, depending for their canonical strength on variable circumstances. But towards the end of the second century the canonical minimum was enlarged and, besides the Gospels and Pauline Epistles, unalterably embraced Acts, I Peter, I John (to which II and III John were probably attached), and Apocalypse. Thus Hebrews, James, Jude, and II Peter remained hovering outside the precincts of universal canonicity, and the controversy about them and the subsequently disputed Apocalypse form the larger part of the remaining history of the Canon of the New Testament. However, at the beginning of the third century the [New Testament](#) was formed in the sense that the content of its main divisions, what may be called its essence, was sharply defined and universally received, while *all* the secondary books were recognized in some Churches. A singular exception to the universality of the above-described substance of the [New Testament](#) was the Canon of the primitive East Syrian Church, which did not contain any of the [Catholic Epistles](#) or Apocalypse.

### The idea of a New Testament

The question of the principle that dominated the practical [canonization](#) of the [New Testament](#) Scriptures has already been discussed under (b). The faithful must have had from the beginning some realization that in the writings of the Apostles and [Evangelists](#) they had acquired a new body of Divine Scriptures, a New written Testament destined to stand side by side with the Old. That the Gospel and Epistles were the written Word of [God](#), was fully realized as soon as the fixed collections were formed; but to seize the relation of this new treasure to the old was possible only when the faithful acquired a better [knowledge](#) of the [faith](#). In this connection Zahn observes with much [truth](#) that the rise of [Montanism](#), with its [false prophets](#), who claimed for their written productions--the self-styled Testament of the [Paraclete](#)--the authority of revelation, around the [Christian Church](#) to a fuller sense that the age of revelation had expired with the last of the Apostles, and that the circle of sacred Scripture is not extensible beyond the legacy of the Apostolic Era. [Montanism](#) began in 156; a generation later, in the works of [Irenæus](#), we discover the firmly-rooted [idea](#) of two Testaments, with the same Spirit operating in both. For [Tertullian](#) (c. 200) the body of the New Scripture is an *instrumentum* on at least an equal footing and in the same specific class as the *instrumentum* formed by the Law and the Prophets. [Clement of Alexandria](#) was the first to apply the word "Testament" to the sacred [library](#) of the New Dispensation. A kindred external influence is to be added to [Montanism](#): the need of setting up a barrier, between the genuine inspired literature and the flood of pseudo-Apostolic apocrypha, gave an additional impulse to the [idea](#) of a New Testament canon, and later contributed not a little to the demarcation of its fixed limits.

### The period of discussion (A.D. 220-367)

In this stage of the historical development of the Canon of the New Testament we encounter for the first time a consciousness reflected in certain [ecclesiastical](#) writers, of the differences between the sacred collections in divers sections of [Christendom](#). This variation is witnessed to, and the discussion stimulated by, two of the most learned men of [Christian antiquity](#), [Origen](#), and [Eusebius of Cæsarea](#), the [ecclesiastical historian](#). A glance at the Canon as exhibited in the authorities of the African, or Carthaginian, Church, will complete our brief survey of this period of diversity and discussion:-

#### Origen and his school

[Origen's](#) travels gave him exception opportunities to [know](#) the traditions of widely separated portions of the [Church](#) and made him very conversant with the discrepant attitudes toward certain parts of the [New Testament](#). He divided books with Biblical claims into three classes:

- those universally received;
- those whose Apostolicity was questions;
- [apocryphal](#) works.

In the first class, the *Homologoumena*, stood the Gospels, the thirteen Pauline Epistles, Acts, Apocalypse, I Peter, and I John. The contested writings were Hebrews, II Peter, II and III John, James, Jude, Barnabas, the Shepherd of Hermas, the [Didache](#), and probably the Gospel of the Hebrews. Personally, [Origen](#) accepted all of these as Divinely inspired, though viewing contrary opinions with toleration. [Origen's](#) authority seems to have given to Hebrews and the disputed [Catholic Epistles](#) a firm place in the Alexandrian Canon, their tenure there having been previously insecure, judging from the [exegetical](#) work of Clement, and the list in the Codex Claromontanus, which is assigned by competent scholars to an early Alexandrian origin.

#### Eusebius

[Eusebius](#), [Bishop](#) of Cæsarea in Palestine, was one of [Origen's](#) most eminent disciples, a man of wide erudition. In imitation of his master he divided religious literature into three classes:

- *Homologoumena*, or compositions universally received as sacred, the [Four Gospels](#), thirteen [Epistles](#) of [St. Paul](#), Hebrews, Acts, I Peter, I John, and Apocalypse. There is some inconsistency in his classification; for instance, though ranking Hebrews with the books of universal reception, he elsewhere admits it is disputed.
- The second category is composed of the Antilegomena, or contested writings; these in turn are of the superior and inferior sort. The better ones are the Epistles of St. James and St. Jude, II Peter, II and III John; these, like [Origen](#), [Eusebius](#) wished to be admitted to the Canon, but was forced to record their uncertain status; the Antilegomena of the inferior sort were Barnabas, the [Didache](#), Gospel of the Hebrews, the Acts of Paul, the Shepherd, the Apocalypse of Peter.
- All the rest are spurious (*notha*).

[Eusebius](#) diverged from his Alexandrian master in personally rejecting Apocalypse as an un-Biblical, though compelled to acknowledge its almost universal acceptance. Whence came this unfavourable view of the closing volume of the [Christian Testament](#)?--Zahn attributes it to the influence of Lucian of [Samosata](#), one of the founders of the Antioch [school of exegesis](#), and with whose disciples [Eusebius](#) had been associated. Lucian himself had acquired his [education](#) at [Edessa](#), the [metropolis](#) of Eastern [Syria](#), which had, as already remarked, a singularly curtailed Canon. [Lucian](#) is known to have edited the Scriptures at [Antioch](#), and is supposed to have introduced there the shorter [New Testament](#) which later [St. John Chrysostom](#) and his followers employed--one in which Apocalypse, II Peter, II and III John, and Jude had no place. It is known that [Theodore of Mopsuestia](#) rejected all the [Catholic Epistles](#). In [St. John Chrysostom's](#) ample expositions of the Scriptures there is not a single clear trace of the Apocalypse, which he seems to implicitly exclude the four smaller [Epistles](#)--II Peter, II and III John, and Jude--from the number of the canonical books. Lucian, then, according to Zahn, would have compromised between the Syriac Canon and the Canon of [Origen](#) by admitting the three longer [Catholic Epistles](#) and keeping out Apocalypse. But after allowing fully for the prestige of the founder of the Antioch [school](#), it is difficult to grant that his personal authority could have sufficed to strike such an important work as Apocalypse from the Canon of a notable Church, where it had previously been received. It is more probable that a reaction against the abuse of the Johannine Apocalypse by the [Montanists](#) and [Chilasts](#)--[Asia Minor](#) being the nursery of both these [errors](#)--led to the elimination of a book whose authority had perhaps been previously suspected. Indeed it is quite reasonable to suppose that its early exclusion from the East Syrian Church was an outer wave of the extreme reactionist movement of the [Aloges](#)--also of [Asia Minor](#)--who branded Apocalypse and all the Johannine writings as the work of the [heretic Cerinthus](#). Whatever may have been all the influences ruling the personal Canon of [Eusebius](#), he chose Lucian's text for the fifty copies of the [Bible](#) which he furnished to the



**Church** of Constantinople at the order of his imperial patron Constantine; and he incorporated all the **Catholic Epistles**, but excluded Apocalypse. The latter remained for more than a century banished from the sacred collections as current in **Antioch** and Constantinople. However, this book kept a minority of **Asiatic** suffrages, and, as both Lucian and **Eusebius** had been tainted with **Arianism**, the **approbation** of Apocalypse, opposed by them, finally came to be looked upon as a sign of **orthodoxy**. **Eusebius** was the first to call attention to important variations in the text of the Gospels, viz., the presence in some copies and the absence in others of the final paragraph of Mark, the passage of the Adulterous Woman, and the Bloody Sweat.

### **The African Church**

**St. Cyprian**, whose Scriptural Canon certainly reflects the contents of the first Latin Bible, received all the books of the **New Testament** except Hebrews, II Peter, James, and Jude; however, there was already a strong inclination in his environment to admit II Peter as authentic. Jude had been recognized by **Tertullian**, but, strangely, it had lost its position in the African Church, probably owing to its citation of the **apocryphal** Henoch. **Cyprian's** testimony to the non-canonity of Hebrews and James is confirmed by Commodian, another African writer of the period. A very important witness is the document known as Mommson's Canon, a **manuscript** of the tenth century, but whose original has been ascertained to date from West Africa about the year 360. It is a formal catalogue of the sacred books, unmutated in the **New Testament** portion, and proves that at its time the books universally acknowledged in the influential Church of Carthage were almost identical with those received by **Cyprian** a century before. Hebrews, James, and Jude are entirely wanting. The three Epistles of St. John and II Peter appear, but after each stands the note *una sola*, added by an almost contemporary hand, and evidently in protest against the reception of these Antilegomena, which, presumably, had found a place in the official list recently, but whose right to be there was seriously questioned.

## **The period of fixation (A.D. 367-405)**

### **St. Athanasius**

While the influence of **Athanasius** on the **Canon of the Old Testament** was negative and exclusive (see *supra*), in that of the **New Testament** it was trenchantly constructive. In his "Epistola Festalis" (A.D. 367) the illustrious **Bishop of Alexandria** ranks all of **Origen's New Testament** Antilegomena, which are identical with the deuterios, boldly inside the Canon, without noticing any of the scruples about them. Thenceforward they were formally and firmly fixed in the Alexandrian Canon. And it is significant of the general trend of **ecclesiastical** authority that not only were works which formerly enjoyed high standing at broad-minded Alexandria--the *Apocalypse of Peter* and the *Acts of Paul*--involved by **Athanasius** with the apocrypha, but even some that **Origen** had regarded as inspired--*Barnabas*, the *Shepherd of Hermas*, the *Didache*--were ruthlessly shut out under the same damnatory title.

### **The Roman Church, the synod under Damasus, and St. Jerome**

The Muratorian Canon or Fragment, composed in the **Roman Church** in the last quarter of the second century, is silent about Hebrews, James, II Peter; I Peter, indeed, is not mentioned, but must have been omitted by an oversight, since it was universally received at the time. There is evidence that this restricted Canon obtained not only in the African Church, with slight modifications, as we have seen, but also at **Rome** and in the West generally until the close of the fourth century. The same ancient authority witnesses to the very favourable and perhaps canonical standing enjoyed at **Rome** by the Apocalypse of Peter and the Shepherd of Hermas. In the middle decades of the fourth century the increased intercourse and exchange of views between the Orient and the Occident led to a better mutual acquaintance regarding Biblical canons and the correction of the catalogue of the **Latin Church**. It is a singular fact that while the East, mainly through **St. Jerome's** pen, exerted a disturbing and negative influence on Western opinion regarding the **Old Testament**, the same influence, through probably the same chief intermediary, made for the completeness and integrity of the New Testament canon. The West began to realize that the ancient Apostolic Churches of **Jerusalem** and Antioch, indeed the whole Orient, for more than two centuries had acknowledged Hebrews and James as inspired writings of Apostles, while the venerable Alexandrian Church, supported by the prestige of **Athanasius**, and the powerful Patriarchate of Constantinople, with the scholarship of **Eusebius** behind its judgment, had **canonized** all the disputed Epistles. **St. Jerome**, a rising light in the **Church**, though but a simple **priest**, was summoned by Pope Damasus from the East, where he was pursuing sacred lore, to assist at an eclectic, but not ecumenical, synod at **Rome** in the year 382. Neither the general council at Constantinople of the preceding year nor that of **Nice** (365) had considered the question of the Canon. This Roman synod must have devoted itself specially to the matter. The result of its deliberations, presided over, no doubt, by the energetic Damasus himself, has been preserved in the document called "Decretum Gelasii de recipiendis et non recipiendis libris", a compilation partly of the sixth century, but containing much material **dating** from the two preceding ones. The Damasan catalogue presents the complete and perfect Canon which has been that of the **Church** Universal ever since. The **New Testament** portion bears the marks of Jerome's views. **St. Jerome**, always prepossessed in favour of Oriental positions in matters Biblical, exerted then a **happy** influence in regard to the **New Testament**; if he attempted to place any Eastern restriction upon the **Canon of the Old Testament** his effort failed of any effect. The title of the **decree**--"Nunc vero de scripturis divinis agendum est quid universalis Catholica recipiat ecclesia, et quid vitare debeat"--proves that the council drew up a list of **apocryphal** as well as authentic Scriptures. The Shepherd and the **false** Apocalypse of Peter now received their final blow. "Rome had spoken, and the nations of the West had heard" (Zahn). The works of the Latin **Fathers** of the period--Jerome, **Hilary of Poitiers**, Lucifer of Sardina, **Philaster of Brescia**--manifest the changed attitude toward Hebrews, James, Jude, II Peter, and III John.

### **Fixation in the African and Gallican Churches**

It was some little time before the African Church perfectly adjusted its **New Testament** to the Damasan Canon. Optatus of Mileve (370-85) does not use Hebrews. **St. Augustine**, while himself receiving the integral Canon, acknowledged that many contested this Epistle. But in the Synod of **Hippo** (393) the great Doctor's view prevailed, and the correct Canon was adopted. However, it is evident that it found many opponents in **Africa**, since three councils there at brief intervals--**Hippo**, **Carthage**, in 393; Third of Carthage in 397; Carthage in 419--found it **necessary** to formulate catalogues. The introduction of Hebrews was an especial crux, and a reflection of this is found in the first Carthage list, where the much vexed Epistle, though styled of **St. Paul**, is still numbered separately from the time-consecrated group of thirteen. The catalogues of **Hippo** and Carthage are identical with the **Catholic** Canon of the present. In Gaul some **doubts** lingered for a time, as we find **Pope Innocent I**, in 405, sending a list of the Sacred Books to one of its **bishops**, **Exsuperius of Toulouse**.

So at the close of the first decade of the fifth century the entire **Western Church** was in possession of the full Canon of the New Testament. In the East, where, with the exception of the Edessene Syrian Church, approximate completeness had long obtained without the aid of formal enactments, opinions were still somewhat divided on the Apocalypse. But for the **Catholic Church** as a whole the content of the **New Testament** was definitely fixed, and the discussion closed.

The final process of this Canon's development had been twofold: positive, in the permanent **consecration** of several writings which had long hovered on the line between canonical and **apocryphal**; and negative, by the definite elimination of certain privileged apocrypha that had enjoyed here and there a canonical or quasi-canonical standing. In the reception of the disputed books a growing conviction of Apostolic authorship had much to do, but the ultimate criterion had been their recognition as inspired by a great and ancient division of the **Catholic Church**. Thus, like **Origen**, **St. Jerome** adduces the *testimony of the ancients* and **ecclesiastical** usage in pleading the cause of the Epistle to the Hebrews (De Viris Illustribus, lix). There is no sign that the **Western Church** ever positively repudiated any of the **New Testament** deuterios; not admitted from the beginning, these had slowly advanced towards a complete acceptance there. On the other hand, the apparently formal exclusion of Apocalypse from the sacred catalogue of certain Greek Churches was a transient phase, and supposes its primitive



reception. [Greek Christianity](#) everywhere, from about the beginning of the sixth century, practically had a complete and pure New Testament canon. (See [EPISTLE TO THE HEBREWS](#); [EPISTLES OF ST. PETER](#); [EPISTLE OF JAMES](#); [EPISTLE OF JUDE](#); [EPISTLES OF JOHN](#); [APOCALYPSE](#).)

## Subsequent history of the New Testament canon

### To the Protestant Reformation

The [New Testament](#) in its canonical aspect has little history between the first years of the fifth and the early part of the sixteenth century. As was natural in ages when [ecclesiastical](#) authority had not reached its modern centralization, there were sporadic divergences from the common teaching and tradition. There was no diffused contestation of any book, but here and there attempts by [individuals](#) to *add* something to the received collection. In several ancient Latin [manuscripts](#) the spurious Epistle to the Laodiceans is found among the canonical letters, and, in a few instances, the [apocryphal](#) III Corinthians. The last trace of any Western contradiction within the [Church](#) to the Canon of the New Testament reveals a curious transplantation of Oriental [doubts](#) concerning the Apocalypse. An act of the Synod of Toledo, held in 633, states that many contest the authority of that book, and orders it to be read in the churches under pain of [excommunication](#). The opposition in all probability came from the [Visigoths](#), who had recently been converted from [Arianism](#). The Gothic Bible had been made under Oriental auspices at a time when there was still much hostility to Apocalypse in the East.

### The New Testament and the Council of Trent (1546)

This ecumenical synod had to defend the integrity of the [New Testament](#) as well as the Old against the attacks of the [pseudo-Reformers](#), [Luther](#), basing his action on dogmatic reasons and the judgment of antiquity, had discarded Hebrews, James, Jude, and Apocalypse as altogether uncanonical. [Zwingli](#) could not see in Apocalypse a Biblical book. (Ecolampadius placed [James](#), [Jude](#), [II Peter](#), [II](#) and [III John](#) in an inferior rank. Even a few [Catholic](#) scholars of the [Renaissance](#) type, notably [Erasmus](#) and Cajetan, had thrown some [doubts](#) on the canonicity of the above-mentioned Antilegomena. As to whole books, the [Protestant doubts](#) were the only ones the Fathers of [Trent](#) took cognizance of; there was not the slightest hesitation regarding the authority of any entire document. But the deuterocanonical parts gave the council some concern, viz., the last twelve verses of Mark, the passage about the Bloody Sweat in Luke, and the *Pericope Adulteræ* in John. [Cardinal Cajetan](#) had approvingly quoted an unfavourable comment of [St. Jerome](#) regarding [Mark 16:9-20](#); [Erasmus](#) had rejected the section on the Adulterous Woman as unauthentic. Still, even concerning these no [doubt](#) of authenticity was expressed at [Trent](#); the only question was as to the manner of their reception. In the end these portions were received, like the deuterocanonical books, without the slightest distinction. And the clause "cum omnibus suis partibus" regards especially these portions.--For an account of the action of [Trent](#) on the Canon, the reader is referred back to the respective section of the article: II. *The Canon of the Old Testament in the Catholic Church*.

The [Tridentine decree](#) defining the Canon affirms the authenticity of the books to which proper names are attached, without however including this in the definition. The order of books follows that of the [Bull of Eugenius IV](#) ([Council of Florence](#)), except that Acts was moved from a place before Apocalypse to its present position, and Hebrews put at the end of [St. Paul's Epistles](#). The [Tridentine](#) order has been retained in the official [Vulgate](#) and vernacular [Catholic](#) Bibles. The same is to be said of the titles, which as a rule are traditional ones, taken from the Canons of Florence and Carthage. (For the bearing of the [Vatican Council](#) on the [New Testament](#), see [Part II](#) above.)

### The New Testament canon outside the Church

The Orthodox Russian and other branches of the Eastern Orthodox Church have a [New Testament](#) identical with the [Catholic](#). In [Syria](#) the [Nestorians](#) possess a Canon almost identical with the final one of the ancient East Syrians; they exclude the four smaller [Catholic Epistles](#) and Apocalypse. The [Monophysites](#) receive all the book. The [Armenians](#) have one [apocryphal](#) letter to the Corinthians and two from the same. The [Coptic-Arabic](#) Church include with the canonical Scriptures the Apostolic Constitutions and the Clementine Epistles. The [Ethiopic New Testament](#) also contains the so-called "Apostolic Constitutions".

As for [Protestantism](#), the [Anglicans](#) and [Calvinists](#) always kept the entire [New Testament](#). But for over a century the followers of [Luther](#) excluded Hebrews, James, Jude, and Apocalypse, and even went further than their master by rejecting the three remaining deuterocanonicals, II Peter, II and III John. The trend of the seventeenth century [Lutheran theologians](#) was to class all these writings as of [doubtful](#), or at least inferior, authority. But gradually the German [Protestants](#) familiarized themselves with the [idea](#) that the difference between the contested books of the [New Testament](#) and the rest was one of degree of [certainty](#) as to origin rather than of intrinsic character. The full recognition of these books by the [Calvinists](#) and [Anglicans](#) made it much more difficult for the [Lutherans](#) to exclude the [New Testament](#) deuterocanonicals than those of the Old. One of their writers of the seventeenth century allowed only a theoretic difference between the two classes, and in 1700 [Bossuet](#) could say that all [Catholics](#) and [Protestants](#) agreed on the New Testament canon. The only trace of opposition now remaining in German [Protestant](#) Bibles is in the order, Hebrews, coming with James, Jude, and Apocalypse at the end; the first not being included with the Pauline writings, while James and Jude are not ranked with the [Catholic Epistles](#).

### The criterion of inspiration (less correctly known as the criterion of canonicity)

Even those [Catholic theologians](#) who defend Apostolicity as a test for the inspiration of the [New Testament](#) (see above) admit that it is not exclusive of another criterion, viz., [Catholic tradition](#) as manifested in the universal reception of compositions as Divinely inspired, or the ordinary teaching of the [Church](#), or the [infallible](#) pronouncements of ecumenical councils. This external guarantee is the sufficient, universal, and ordinary [proof](#) of inspiration. The unique quality of the Sacred Books is a [revealed dogma](#). Moreover, by its very nature inspiration eludes human observation and is not self-evident, being essentially superphysical and [supernatural](#). Its sole absolute criterion, therefore, is the Holy inspiring Spirit, witnessing decisively to Itself, not in the subjective experience of individual [souls](#), as [Calvin](#) maintained, neither in the [doctrinal](#) and spiritual tenor of [Holy Writ](#) itself, according to [Luther](#), but through the constituted organ and custodian of Its revelations, the [Church](#). All other evidences fall short of the [certainty](#) and finality [necessary](#) to compel the absolute assent of [faith](#). (See [Franzelin](#), "De Divinâ Traditione et Scripturâ"; [Wiseman](#), "Lectures on Christian Doctrine", Lecture ii; also [INSPIRATION](#).)



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## Eusebius of Caesarea

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Eusebius Pamphili, **Bishop** of Caesarea in Palestine, the "Father of **Church History**"; b. about 260; d. before 341.

### Life

It will save lengthy digression if we at once speak of a document which will often have to be referred to on account of its biographical importance, viz., the letter written by Eusebius to his **diocese** in order to explain his subscription to the Creed propounded by the **Council of Nicæa**. After some preliminary remarks, the writer proceeds: "We first transmit to you the writing concerning the **faith** which was put forward by us, and then the second, which they have published after putting in additions to our expressions. Now the writing presented by us, which when read in the presence of our most religious emperor was declared to have a right and approved character was as follows: [The Faith put forward by us]. As we have received from the **bishops** before us both in our first **catechetical** instruction and when we were **baptized**, and as we have learned from the Divine Scriptures, and as we have believed and taught in the presbyterate and in the office of **bishop** itself so now likewise **believing** we offer to you our **faith** and it is thus." Then follows a formal creed [Theodoret, Hist., I, 11; **Socrates**, Hist., I, 8; St. Athanasius, de Dec. Syn. Nic. (appendix) and elsewhere. Translated by **Newman** with notes in the Oxford Library of the Fathers (Select Treatises of St. Athanasius, p. 59) and St. Athanasius, vol. I. The translation given here is Dr. Hort's. The words in brackets are probably genuine though not given by **Socrates** and St. Athanasius].

Dr. Hort in 1876 ("Two Dissertations", etc., pp. 56 sqq.) pointed out that this creed was presumably that of the **Church** of Caesarea of which Eusebius was **bishop**. This view is widely accepted (cf. Lightfoot, art. "Euseb." in "Dict. of Christ. Biog." — All references to Lightfoot, unless otherwise stated, are to this article. — Sanday, "Journal of Theolog. Studies", vol. I, p. 15; Gwatkin, "Studies of Arianism", p. 42, 2nd edition; McGiffert, "Prolog. to C. H. of Euseb." in "Select Library of Nic. and post-Nic. Fathers"; Duchesne, "Hist. de l'Eglise", vol. II, p. 149). According to this view it is natural to regard the introduction, "As we have received" etc., as autobiographical, and to infer that Eusebius had exercised the office of **priesthood** in the city of Caesarea before he became its **bishop**, and had received his earliest religious instruction and the sacrament of Baptism there also. But other interpretations of this document are given, one of which destroys, while the other diminishes, its biographical value: (a) According to some the creed proffered by Eusebius was drawn up as a formula to be subscribed by all the **bishops**. It was they who were to say that it embodied what they had been taught as **catechumens** and had taught as **priests** and **bishops**. This seems to have been the view generally held before Hort, and was Kattenbusch's view in 1804 (Das apostolische Symbol, vol. I, p. 231). One objection to this view may be noted. It makes *all* the **bishops** equivalently say that before they received the episcopate they had for some time exercised the **duties** of the **priesthood**. (b) Others maintain that this creed was not the local creed of Caesarea, but one drawn up by Eusebius in his own justification as embodying what he had always believed and taught. According to this interpretation the preliminary statement still remains autobiographical; but it merely informs us that the writer exercised the office of **priest** before he became a **bishop**. This interpretation has been adopted by Kattenbusch in his second volume (p. 239) published in 1900. One of the reasons which he gives for his change of view is that when he was preparing his first volume he used **Socrates**, who does not give the superscription which we have printed in brackets. It is a vital matter with writers of the **school** of Kattenbusch not to accept what seems the natural interpretation of Eusebius's words, viz., that the creed he read before the council was actually the one he had always used. If this is admitted, "then", to quote Dr. Sanday, "I cannot but think that the theory of Kattenbusch and Harnack [viz. that the Eastern creeds were daughters of the early Roman creed, and this latter did not reach the East till about A.D. 272] breaks breaks down altogether. Bishop Lightfoot ... puts the birth of Eusebius about 260 A. D., so that he would be something like twelve years old when **Aurelian** intervened in the affairs of Antioch. In other words he was in all probability already **baptized**, and had already been catechised in the Caesarean creed at a time when, in the Kattenbusch-Harnack hypothesis, the parent of that creed had not yet reached Antioch — much less Caesarea or **Jerusalem**" (Journ. Th. Studies, I, 15).

The passage just quoted shows that the **date** of Eusebius's birth is more than a merely curious question. According to Lightfoot, it cannot have been "much later than A.D. 260" (p. 309); according to Harnack, "it can hardly be placed later than 260-265" (Chronologie, I, p. 106). The data from which they argue are the **persons** and events which Eusebius describes as belonging to "our own times". Thus, at the end of his account of the epistles of **Dionysius of Alexandria**, he says he is now going to relate the events of "our own times" (*kath' emās*. — **Church History** VII.26). He then recounts how, at **Rome**, Pope Dionysius (259-268) succeeded **Xystus**, and about the same time **Paul of Samosata** became **Bishop** of **Antioch**. Elsewhere (**Church History** V.28) he speaks of the same Paul as reviving "in our own time" (*kath' emās*) the **heresy** of **Artemon**. He also speaks of the Alexandrian Dionysius (d. 265) in the same way (**Church History** III.28). He calls Manes, whom he places (**Church History** VII.31) during the episcopate of Felix (270-274), "the maniac of yesterday and our own times" (Theophania, IV, 30). An historian might of course refer to events recent, but before his own birth, as belonging to "our own times"; e.g. a man of thirty might speak thus of the Franco-German **war** in 1870. But the reference to Manes as "the maniac of yesterday" certainly suggests a writer who is alluding to what happened within his own personal recollection.

Concerning Eusebius's parentage we **know** absolutely nothing; but the fact that he escaped with a short term of **imprisonment** during the terrible **Diocletian persecution**, when his master **Pamphilus** and others of his companions suffered **martyrdom**, suggests that he belonged to a **family** of some influence and importance. His relations, later on, with the **Emperor Constantine** point to the same conclusion. At some time during the last twenty years of the third century he visited Antioch, where he made the acquaintance of the **priest** Dorotheus, and heard him expound the Scriptures (**Church History** VII.32). By a slip of the pen or the memory, Lightfoot (p. 309) makes Dorotheus a **priest** of the **Church** of Caesarea. In 296 he saw for the first time the future **Emperor Constantine**, as he passed through Palestine in the company of **Diocletian** (Vit. Const., I, 19).

At a date which cannot be fixed Eusebius made the acquaintance of **Pamphilus**, the founder of the magnificent **library** which remained for several centuries the great glory of the **Church** of Caesarea. **Pamphilus** came from Phœnicia, but at the time we are considering resided at Caesarea, where he presided over a **college** or **school** for students. A man of noble birth, and wealthy, he sold his patrimony and gave the proceeds to the poor. He was a great friend to indigent students, supplying them to the best of his ability with the necessities of life, and bestowing on them copies of the **Holy Scripture**. Too **humble** to write anything himself, he spent his time in



preparing accurate copies of the Scriptures and other books, especially those of [Origen](#). Eloquent testimonies to the care bestowed by [Pamphilus](#) and Eusebius on the [sacred text](#) are found in Biblical [manuscripts](#) which have reproduced their colophons. We give three specimens. (1) the following is prefixed to Ezechiel in the codex Marchalianus. A facsimile of the original will be found in [Mai's](#) "Bib. nov. Pat.", IV, p. 218, and in [Migne](#). It is printed in ordinary type in Swete's O. T. in Greek (vol. III, p. viii). It must be remembered that [Origen's](#) own copy of the [Hexapla](#) was in the [library](#) of [Pamphilus](#). It had probably been deposited there by [Origen](#) himself.

The following was transcribed from a copy of the Father Apollinarius the Coenobiarch, to which these words are subjoined: "It was transcribed from the editions of the [Hexapla](#) and was corrected from the Tetrapla of [Origen](#) himself which also had been corrected and furnished with scholia in his own handwriting, whence I, Eusebius, added the scholia, [Pamphilus](#) and Eusebius corrected."

(2) At the end of the Book of Esdras, in the codex Sinaiticus, there is the following note:—

It was compared with a very ancient copy that had been corrected by the hand of the blessed [martyr Pamphilus](#) to which is appended in his own hand this subscription: "It was transcribed and corrected according to the [Hexapla](#) of [Origen](#), Antoninus compared, I, [Pamphilus](#), corrected." (Swete, vol. II, p. 212.)

(3) The same codex and also the Vatican and Alexandrine quote a colophon like the above, with the difference that Antoninus has become a confessor, and [Pamphilus](#) is in [prison](#) — "Antoninus the confessor compared, [Pamphilus](#) corrected". The volume to which this colophon was subjoined began with [1 Samuel](#) and ended with Esther. [Pamphilus](#) was certainly not idle in [prison](#). To most of the books in the Syro-Hexaplar is subjoined a note to the effect that they were translated from the [Hexapla](#) in the [library](#) of [Caesarea](#) and compared with a copy subscribed: "I, Eusebius, corrected [the above] as carefully as I could" (Harnack, "Altchrist. Lit.", pp. 544, 545).

May not the confessor Antoninus be the same [person](#) as the [priest](#) of that name who, later on, with two companions interrupted the governor when he was on the point of sacrificing, and was beheaded? (Mart. Pal., 9.) One member of [Pamphilus's](#) household, Apphianus, had done the same a few years before; and another, Ædesius, after being tortured and sent to the mines, on obtaining his release provoked [martyrdom](#) at [Alexandria](#) by going before the governor and rebuking him. Towards the end of 307 [Pamphilus](#) was arrested, horribly tortured, and consigned to [prison](#). Besides continuing his work of editing the [Septuagint](#), he wrote, in collaboration with Eusebius, a Defence of [Origen](#) which was sent to the confessors in the mines — a wonderful gift from a man whose sides had been curried with iron combs, to men with their right eyes burned out and the sinews of their left legs cauterized. Early in 309 [Pamphilus](#) and several of his disciples were beheaded. Out of devotion to his memory Eusebius called himself Eusebius Pamphili, meaning, probably, that he wished to be regarded as the bondsman of him whose name "it is not meet that I should mention ... without styling him my lord" (Mart. Pal., ed. Cureton, p. 37). Mr. Gifford, in the introduction to his translation of the "Præp. Evang.", has suggested another explanation on the authority of an ancient scholion emanating from [Caesarea](#) which calls Eusebius the "son of [Pamphilus](#)". He argues further that [Pamphilus](#), in order to make Eusebius his heir, took the [necessary](#) step of adopting him.

During the [persecution](#) Eusebius visited [Tyre](#) and [Egypt](#) and witnessed numbers of [martyrdoms](#) ([Church History](#) VII.7-9). He certainly did not shun danger, and was at one time a [prisoner](#). When, where, or how he escaped death or any kind of mutilation, we do not [know](#). An indignant [bishop](#), who had been one of his fellow-prisoners and "lost an eye for the Truth", demanded at the Council of [Tyre](#) how "he came off scathless". To this taunt — it was hardly a question — made under circumstances of great provocation, Eusebius deigned no reply (Epiph., Hær., lxxiii, 8; cf. St. Athanas., "Apol. c. Arian.", viii, 1). He had many enemies, yet the charge of cowardice was never seriously made — the best [proof](#) that it could not have been sustained. We may assume that, as soon as the [persecution](#) began to relax, Eusebius succeeded [Pamphilus](#) in the charge of the college and [library](#). Perhaps he was [ordained priest](#) about this time. By 315 he was already a [bishop](#), for he was present in that capacity at the dedication of a new basilica at [Tyre](#), on which occasion he delivered a discourse given in full in the last book of the [Church history](#).

Alexander, [Bishop](#) of [Alexandria](#), [excommunicated](#) Arius about the year 320. The [Arians](#) soon found that for all practical purposes Eusebius was on their side. He wrote to Alexander charging him with misrepresenting the teaching of the [Arians](#) and so giving them cause "to attack and misrepresent whatever they please" (see below). A portion of this letter has been preserved in the Acts of the [second Council of Nicæa](#), where it was cited to prove that Eusebius was a [heretic](#). He also took part in a synod of Syrian [bishops](#) who decided that Arius should be restored to his former position, but on his side he was to obey his [bishop](#) and continually entreat peace and communion with him ([Sozomen](#), [Church History](#) I.15). According to Duchesne (Hist. de l'Église, II, 132), Arius, like [Origen](#) before him, found an asylum at [Caesarea](#). At the opening of the [Council of Nicæa](#) Eusebius occupied the first seat on the right of the emperor, and delivered the inaugural address which was "couched in a strain of thanksgiving to [Almighty God](#) on his, the emperor's behalf" (Vit. Const., III, 11; [Sozomen](#), [Church History](#) I.19). He evidently enjoyed great prestige and may not unreasonably have expected to be able to steer the council through the *via media* between the Scylla and Charybdis of "Yes" and "No". But if he entertained such hopes they were soon disappointed. We have already spoken of the profession of [faith](#) which he brought forward to vindicate his own [orthodoxy](#), or perhaps in the hope that the council might adopt it. It was, in view of the actual state of the controversy, a colourless, or what at the present day would be called a comprehensive, formula. After some delay Eusebius subscribed to the uncompromising creed drawn up by the council, making no secret, in the letter which he wrote to his own Church, of the non-natural sense in which he accepted it. Between 325 and 330 a heated controversy took place between Eusebius and Eustathius, [Bishop](#) of [Antioch](#). Eustathius accused Eusebius of tampering with the [faith](#) of Nicæa; the latter retorted with the charge of [Sabellianism](#). In 331 Eusebius was among the [bishops](#) who, at a [synod](#) held in [Antioch](#), deposed Eustathius. He was offered and refused the vacant see. In 334 and 335 he took part in the campaign against St. Athanasius at the [synods](#) held in [Caesarea](#) and [Tyre](#) respectively. From [Tyre](#) the assembly of [bishops](#) were summoned to Jerusalem by Constantine, to assist at the dedication of the basilica he had erected on the site of Calvary. After the dedication they restored Arius and his followers to communion. From [Jerusalem](#) they were summoned to Constantinople (336), where Marcellus was condemned. The following year Constantine died. Eusebius survived him long enough to write his Life and two treatises against Marcellus, but by the summer of 341 he was already dead, since it was his successor, Acacius, who assisted as [Bishop](#) of [Caesarea](#) at a [synod](#) held at Antioch in the summer of that year.

## Writings

We shall take Eusebius's writings in the order given in Harnack's "Altchrist. Lit.", pp. 554 sqq.

### Historical

(1) The lost Life of [Pamphilus](#), often referred to by Eusebius, of which only a single fragment, describing [Pamphilus'](#) liberality to poor students, quoted by [St. Jerome](#) (c. Ruffin., I, ix), survives.

(2) A collection of Ancient Martyrdoms, used by the compiler of Wright's Syriac Martyrology, also lost.

(3) On the Martyrs of Palestine. There are two distinct forms of this work, both drawn up by Eusebius. The longer is only extant in a Syriac version which was first edited and translated by Cureton in 1861. The shorter form is found in most [manuscripts](#) (not, however, in the best) of the [Church History](#), sometimes at the end of the last book, generally between books VIII and IX, also in the middle of book VIII. The existence of the same work in two different forms raises a number of curious literary problems. There is, of course, the question of priority. Here, with two notable exceptions, scholars seem to be agreed in favour of the longer form. Then comes the question, why Eusebius abridged it and, finally, how the abridgment found its way into the [Church History](#). The shorter form lacks some introductory remarks, referred to in c. xiii, which defined the scope of the book. It also breaks off when the writer is about to "record the palinode" of the [persecutors](#). It seems probable that part of the missing conclusion is extant in the form of an appendix to the eighth book of the [Church History](#) found in several [manuscripts](#). This appendix contrasts the miserable fate of the [persecutors](#) with the good fortune of Constantine and his [father](#).



From these data Lightfoot concludes that what we now possess formed "part of a larger work in which the sufferings of the Martyrs were set off against the deaths of the [persecutors](#)". It must, however, be remembered that the missing parts would not add much to the book. So far as the [martyrs](#) are concerned, it is evidently complete, and the fate of the [persecutors](#) would not take long in the telling. Still, the missing conclusion may explain why Eusebius curtailed his account of the Martyrs. The book, in both forms, was intended for popular reading. It was therefore desirable to keep down the price of copies. If this was to be done, and new matter (i.e. the fate of the [persecutors](#)) added, the old matter had to be somewhat curtailed. In 1894, in the *Theologische Literaturzeitung* (p. 464) Preuschen threw out the [idea](#) that the shorter form was merely a rough draft not intended for publication. Bruno Violet, in his "Die Palästinischen Martyrer" (*Texte u. Untersuch.*, XIV, 4, 1896) followed up this [idea](#) and pointed out that, whereas the longer form was constantly used by the compilers of Martyrologies, [Menologies](#), and the like, the shorter form was never used. In a review of Violet (*Theolog. Lit.*, 1897, p. 300), Preuschen returns to his original [idea](#), and further suggests that the shorter form must have been joined to the [Church History](#) by some copyist who had access to Eusebius's [manuscripts](#) Harnack (*Chronologie*, 11, 115) holds to the priority of the longer form, but he thinks that the shorter form was composed almost at the same time for readers of the [Church History](#).

(4) The Chronicle (see separate article, [CHRONICLE OF EUSEBIUS](#)).

(5) The [Church History](#). It would be difficult to overestimate the [obligation](#) which posterity is under to Eusebius for this monumental work. Living during the period of transition, when the old order was changing and all connected with it was passing into oblivion, he came forward at the critical moment with his immense stores of learning and preserved priceless treasures of [Christian](#) antiquity. This is the great merit of the [Church History](#). It is not a literary work which can be read with any pleasure for the sake of its style. Eusebius's "diction", as Photius said, "is never pleasant nor clear". Neither is it the work of a great thinker. But it is a storehouse of information collected by an indefatigable student. Still, great as was Eusebius's learning, it had its limitations. He is provokingly ill-informed about the West. That he knows very little about [Tertullian](#) or [St. Cyprian](#) is due, no doubt, to his scant [knowledge](#) of Latin; but in the case of a Greek writer, like [Hippolytus](#), we can only suppose that his works somehow failed to make their way to the libraries of the East. Eusebius's [good faith](#) and sincerity has been amply vindicated by Lightfoot. Gibbon's celebrated sneer, about a writer "who indirectly confesses that he has related whatever might redound to the glory, and that he has suppressed all that could tend to the disgrace, of religion", can be sufficiently met by referring to the passages ([Church History](#) VIII.2; *Mart. Pal.* c. 12) on which it is based. Eusebius does not "indirectly confess", but openly avows, that he passes over certain [scandals](#), and he enumerates them and denounces them. "Nor again", to quote Lightfoot, "can the special charges against his [honour](#) as a narrator be sustained. There is no ground whatever for the charge that Eusebius forged or interpolated the passage from [Josephus](#) relating to our Lord quoted in [Church History](#) I.11, though Heinichen is disposed to entertain the charge. Inasmuch as this passage is contained in all our [manuscripts](#), and there is sufficient evidence that other interpolations (though not this) were introduced into the text of [Josephus](#) long before his time (see *Orig.*, c. Cels., I, 47, Delarue's note) no suspicion can justly attach to Eusebius himself. Another interpolation in the Jewish historian, which he quotes elsewhere (11, 23), was certainly known to [Origen](#) (l. c.). Doubtless also the omission of the owl in the account of [Herod Agrippa's](#) death ([Church History](#) II.10) was already in some texts of [Josephus](#) (*Ant.*, XIX, 8, 2). The manner in which Eusebius deals with his numerous quotations elsewhere, where we can test his honesty, is a sufficient vindication against this [unjust](#) charge" (*L.*, p. 325).

The notices in the [Church History](#) bearing on the [New Testament canon](#) are so important that a word must be said about the rule followed by Eusebius in what he recorded and what he left unrecorded. Speaking generally, his principle seems to have been to quote testimonies for and against those books only whose claims to a place in the Canon had been disputed. In the case of undisputed books he gave any interesting information concerning their composition which he had come across in his reading. The subject was most carefully investigated by Lightfoot in an article in "The Contemporary" (January, 1875, reprinted in "Essays on Supernatural Religion"), entitled "The Silence of Eusebius". In regard to the Gospel of St. John, Lightfoot concludes: "The silence of Eusebius respecting early witnesses to the [Fourth Gospel](#) is an evidence in its favour." For the episcopal lists in the [Church History](#), see article on the [Chronicle](#). The tenth book of the [Church History](#) records the defeat of Licinius in 323, and must have been completed before the death and disgrace of Crispus in 326, for it refers to him as Constantine's "most [pious](#) son". The ninth book was completed between the defeat of [Maxentius](#) in 312, and Constantine's first rupture with Licinius in 314.

(6) The Life of Constantine, in four books. This work has been most [unjustly](#) blamed, from the time of [Socrates](#) downwards, because it is a panegyric rather than a history. If ever there was a man under an [obligation](#) to respect the maxim, *De mortuis nil nisi bonum*, this man was Eusebius, writing the Life of Constantine within three years after his death (337). This Life is especially valuable because of the account it gives of the [Council of Nicæa](#) and the earlier phases of the [Arian](#) controversy. It is well to remember that one of our chief sources of information for the history of that council is a book written to magnify Constantine.

## Apologetic

(7) Against Hierocles. Hierocles, who, as governor in Bithynia and in [Egypt](#), was a cruel enemy of the [Christians](#) during the [persecution](#), before the [persecution](#) had attacked them with the pen. There was nothing original about his work except the use he made of Philostratus's Life of Apollonius of [Tyana](#) to institute a comparison between the Lord and Apollonius in favour of the latter. In his reply Eusebius confined himself to this one point.

(8) "Against Porphyry", a work in twenty-five books of which not a fragment survives.

(9) The "Præparatio Evangelica", in fifteen books.

(10) The "Demonstratio Evangelica", in twenty books, of which the last ten, with the exception of a fragment of the fifteenth, are lost. The object of these two treatises, which should be regarded as two parts of one comprehensive work, was to justify the [Christian](#) in rejecting the religion and philosophy of the Greeks in favour of that of the Hebrews, and then to justify him in not observing the Jewish manner of life. The "Præparatio" is devoted to the first of these objects. The following summary of its contents is taken from Mr. Gifford's introduction to his translation of the "Præparatio": "The first three books discuss the threefold system of [Pagan](#) Theology, Mythical, Allegorical, and Political. The next three, IV-VI, give an account of the chief oracles, of the worship of *dæmons*, and of the various opinions of Greek Philosophers on the doctrines of [Plato](#) and Free Will. Books VII-IX give reasons for preferring the religion of the Hebrews founded chiefly on the testimony of various authors to the excellency of their Scriptures and the [truth](#) of their history. In Books X-XII Eusebius argues that the Greeks had borrowed from the older [theology](#) and philosophy of the Hebrews, dwelling especially on the supposed dependence of [Plato](#) upon Moses. In the last three books the comparison of Moses with [Plato](#) is continued, and the mutual contradictions of other Greek Philosophers, especially the Peripatetics and [Stoics](#), are exposed and criticized."

The "Præparatio" is a gigantic feat of erudition, and, according to Harnack (*Chronologie*, II, p. 120), was, like many of Eusebius's other works, actually composed during the stress of the [persecution](#). It ranks, with the Chronicle, second only to the [Church History](#) in importance, because of its copious extracts from ancient authors whose works have perished. The first book of the Demonstratio chiefly deals with the temporary character of the [Mosaic Law](#). In the second the prophecies concerning the vocation of the [Gentiles](#) and the rejection of the [Jews](#) are discussed. In the remaining eight the testimonies of the [prophets](#) concerning Christ are treated of.

We now pass to three books, of which nothing is known save that they were read by Photius, viz. (11), The "Præparatio Ecclesiastica", (12), the "Demonstratio Ecclesiastica", and (13) Two Books of Objection and Defence, of which, from Photius's account, there seem to have been two separate editions.

(14) The "Theophania" or "Divine Manifestation". Except for a few fragments of the original, this work is only extant in a Syriac version discovered by Tattam, edited by Lee in 1842, and translated by the same in 1843. It



treats of the cosmic function of the Word, the nature of man, the need of revelation, etc. The fourth and fifth books are particularly remarkable as a kind of anticipation of modern books on [Christian](#) evidences. A curious literary problem arises out of the relations between the "Theophania" and the work "De Laudibus Constantini". There are entire passages which are almost verbatim the same in both works. Lightfoot decides in favour of the priority of the first-named work. Gressel, who has edited the "Theophania" for the Berlin edition of the [Greek Fathers](#), takes the opposite view. He compares the parallel passages and argues that they are improved in the "De Laudibus Constantini".

(15) "On the Numerous Progeny of the Ancients". This work is referred to by Eusebius twice, in the "Præp. Ev.", VII, 8, and in the "Dem. Ev.", VII, 8; and also (Lightfoot and Harnack think) by [St. Basil](#) (*On the Holy Spirit* 29), where he says, "I draw attention to his [Eusebius's] words in discussing the difficulties started in connexion with ancient [polygamy](#)." Arguing from St. Basil's words, Lightfoot thinks that in this treatise Eusebius dealt with the difficulty presented by the Patriarchs possessing more than one wife. But he overlooked the reference in the "Dem. Ev.", from which it would appear that the difficulty dealt with was, perhaps, a more general one, viz., the contrast presented by the desire of the Patriarchs for a numerous offspring and the [honour](#) in which continence was held by [Christians](#).

### Exegetical

(16) Eusebius narrates, in his Life of Constantine (IV, 36, 37), how he was commissioned by the emperor to prepare fifty sumptuous copies of the [Bible](#) for use in the Churches of Constantinople. Some scholars have supposed that the [Codex Sinaiticus](#) was one of these copies. Lightfoot rejects this view chiefly on the ground that "the Text of the codex in many respects differs too widely from the readings found in Eusebius".

(17) Sections and Canons. Eusebius drew up ten canons, the first containing a list of passages common to all four [Evangelists](#); the second, those common to the first three and so on. He also divided the Gospels into sections numbered continuously. A number, against a section, referred the reader to the particular canon where he could find the parallel sections or passages.

(18) The labours of [Pamphilus](#) and Eusebius in editing the [Septuagint](#) have already been spoken of. They "believed (as did [St. Jerome](#) nearly a century afterwards) that [Origen](#) had succeeded in restoring the old Greek version to its primitive purity". The result was a "mischievous mixture of the Alexandrian version with the versions of [Aquila](#) and Theodotion" (Swete, "Introd. to O. T. in Greek", pp. 77, 78). For the labours of the two friends on the text of the [New Testament](#) the reader may be referred to Rousset, "Textcritische Studien zum N. T.", c. ii. Whether as in the case of the [Old Testament](#), they worked on any definite critical principles is not known.

(19) (a) Interpretation of the ethnological terms in the Hebrew Scriptures; (b) Chronography of Ancient Judaea with the Inheritances of the Ten Tribes; (c) A plan of [Jerusalem](#) and the Temple; (d) on the Names of Places in the [Holy Scripture](#). These four works were written at the request of Eusebius's friend Paulinus. Only the fourth is extant. It is known as the "Topics," or the "Onomasticon".

(20) On the nomenclature of the Book of the Prophets. This work gives a short biography of each Prophet and an account of his prophecies.

(21) Commentary on the Psalms. There are many gaps in the [manuscripts](#) of this work, and they end in the 118th Psalm. The missing portions are in part supplied by extracts from the Catenæ. An allusion to the discovery of the Holy Sepulchre fixes the date at about 330. Lightfoot speaks very highly of this commentary.

(22) Commentary on [Isaiah](#), written after the persecution.

(23 to 28) Commentaries on other books of [Holy Scripture](#), of some of which what may be extracts are preserved.

(29) Commentary on [St. Luke](#), of which what seem to be extracts are preserved.

(30) Commentary on [First Corinthians](#), the existence of which seems to be implied by [St. Jerome](#) (Ep. xlix).

(31) Commentary on [Hebrews](#). A passage that seems to belong to such a commentary was discovered and published by Mai.

(32) On the Discrepancies of the Gospels, in two parts. An epitome, very probably from the hand of Eusebius, of this work was discovered and published by [Mai](#) in 1825. Extracts from the original are preserved. Of the two parts, the first, dedicated to a certain Stephen, discusses questions respecting the genealogies of Christ; the second, dedicated to one Marinus, questions concerning the [Resurrection](#). The Discrepancies were largely borrowed from by [St. Jerome](#) and [St. Ambrose](#), and have thus indirectly exercised a considerable influence on Biblical studies.

(33) General Elementary Introduction, consisting of ten books, of which VI-IX are extant under the title of "Prophetical Extracts". These were written during the [persecution](#). There are also a few fragments of the remaining books. "This work seems to have been a general introduction to [theology](#), and its contents were very miscellaneous as the extant remains show" (L., p. 339).

### Dogmatic

(34) The Apology for [Origen](#). This work has already been mentioned in connexion with [Pamphilus](#). It consisted of six books, the last of which was added by Eusebius. Only the first book is extant, in a translation by Rufinus.

(35) "Against Marcellus, Bishop of [Ancyra](#)", and (36) "On the Theology of the Church", a refutation of Marcellus. In two articles in the "Zeitschrift für die Neutest. Wissenschaft" (vol. IV, pp. 330 sqq. and vol. VI, pp. 250 sqq.), written in English, Prof. Conybeare has maintained that our Eusebius could not have been the author of the two treatises against Marcellus. His arguments are rejected by Prof. Klostermann, in his introduction to these two works published in 1905 for the Berlin edition of the [Greek Fathers](#). The "Contra Marcellum" was written after 336 to justify the action of the synod held at Constantinople when Marcellus was deposed; the "Theology" a year or two later.

(37) "On the Paschal Festival" (a [mystical](#) interpretation). This work was addressed to Constantine (Vit. Const., IV, 35, 316). A long fragment of it was discovered by [Mai](#).

(38) A treatise against the Manichæans is perhaps implied by Epiphanius (Hær., lxxvi, 21).

### Orations and sermons

(39) At the Dedication of the Church in Tyre (see above).

(40) At the Vicennalia of Constantine. This seems to have been the opening address delivered at the Council of Nicæa. It is not extant.

(41) On the Sepulchre of the Saviour, A.D. 325 (Vit. Const., IV, 33) not extant.

(42) At the Tricennalia of Constantine. This work is generally known as the "De Laudibus Constantini". The second part (11-18) seems to have been a separate oration joined on to the Tricennalia.

(43) "In Praise of the Martyrs". This oration is preserved in the same [manuscript](#) as the "Theophania" and "Martyrs of Palestine". It was published and translated in the "Journal of Sacred Literature" by Mr. H. B. Cowper (New Series, V, pp. 403 sqq., and *ibid.* VI, pp. 129 sqq.).

(44) On the Failure of Rain, not extant.



## Letters

The history of the preservation of the three letters, (45) to Alexander of [Alexandria](#), (46) to Euphrasion, or Euphrat, (47) to the Empress Constantia, is sufficiently curious. Constantia asked Eusebius to send her a certain likeness of Christ of which she had heard; his refusal was couched in terms which centuries afterwards were appealed to by the [Iconoclasts](#). A portion of this letter was read at the [Second Council of Nicæa](#), and against it were set portions from the letters to Alexander and Euphrasion to prove that Eusebius "was delivered up to a reprobate sense, and of one mind and opinion with those who followed the [Arian superstition](#)" (Labbe, "Conc.", VIII, 1143-1147; [Mansi](#), "Conc.", XIII, 313-317). Besides the passage quoted in the council, other parts of the letter to Constantia are extant.

(48) To the Church of Cæsarea after the Council of Nicæa. This letter has already been described.



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## Origen and Origenism

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## Life and work of Origen

### Biography

Origen, most modest of writers, hardly ever alludes to himself in his own works; but [Eusebius](#) has devoted to him almost the entire sixth book of "Ecclesiastical History". [Eusebius](#) was thoroughly acquainted with the life of his hero; he had collected a hundred of his letters; in collaboration with the [martyr Pamphilus](#) he had composed the "Apology for Origen"; he dwelt at Caesarea where Origen's [library](#) was preserved, and where his memory still lingered; if at times he may be thought somewhat partial, he is undoubtedly well informed. We find some details also in the "Farewell Address" of [St. Gregory Thaumaturgus](#) to his master, in the controversies of [St. Jerome](#) and Rufinus, in [St. Epiphanius](#) (Haeres., LXIV), and in Photius (Biblioth. Cod. 118).

### Origen at Alexandria (185-232)

Born in 185, Origen was barely seventeen when a bloody [persecution](#) of the [Church](#) of Alexandrian broke out. His father Leonides, who admired his precocious genius was charmed with his virtuous life, had given him an excellent literary [education](#). When Leonides was cast into [prison](#), Origen would fain have shared his lot, but being unable to carry out his resolution, as his mother had hidden his clothes, he wrote an ardent, enthusiastic letter to his [father](#) exhorting him to persevere [courageously](#). When Leonides had won the [martyr's](#) crown and his fortune had been confiscated by the imperial authorities, the heroic child laboured to support himself, his mother, and his six younger brothers. This he successfully accomplished by becoming a teacher, selling his [manuscripts](#), and by the generous aid of a certain rich lady, who admired his talents. He assumed, of his own accord, the direction of the [catechetical school](#), on the withdrawal of Clement, and in the following year was confirmed in his office by the patriarch Demetrius ([Eusebius](#), *Church History* VI.2; [St. Jerome](#), "De viris illust.", liv). Origen's [school](#), which was frequented by [pagans](#), soon became a nursery of [neophytes](#), confessors, and [martyrs](#). Among the latter were Plutarch, Serenus, Heraclides, Heron, another Serenus, and a [female catechumen](#), Herais ([Eusebius](#), *Church History* VI.4). He accompanied them to the scene of their victories encouraging them by his exhortations. There is nothing more touching than this picture [Eusebius](#) has drawn of Origen's youth, so studious, disinterested, austere and pure, ardent and [zealous](#) even to indiscretion (VI, iii and vi). Thrust thus at so early an age into the teacher's chair, he recognized the necessity of completing his [education](#). Frequenting the philosophic [schools](#), especially that of Ammonius Saccas, he devoted himself to a study of the [philosophers](#), particularly [Plato](#) and the [Stoics](#). In this he was but following the example of his predecessors Pantenus and Clement, and of Heracles, who was to succeed him. Afterwards, when the latter shared his labours in the [catechetical school](#), he learned Hebrew, and communicated frequently with certain [Jews](#) who helped him to solve his difficulties.

The course of his work at [Alexandria](#) was interrupted by five journeys. About 213, under [Pope Zephyrinus](#) and the [emperor Caracalla](#), he desired "to see the very ancient Church of Rome", but he did not remain there long ([Eusebius](#), *Church History* VI.14). Shortly afterwards he was invited to Arabia by the governor who was desirous of meeting him (VI, xix). It was probably in 215 or 216 when the [persecution](#) of [Caracalla](#) was raging in [Egypt](#) that he visited Palestine, where Theoctistus of Caesarea and [Alexander of Jerusalem](#), invited him to preach though he was still a [layman](#). Towards 218, it would appear, the empress Mamaea, mother of [Alexander Severus](#), brought him to Antioch (VI, xxi). Finally, at a much later period, under Pontian of [Rome](#) and Zebinus of Antioch ([Eusebius](#), VI, xxiii), he journeyed into [Greece](#), passing through Caesarea where Theoctistus, [Bishop](#) of that city, assisted by Alexander, [Bishop](#) of [Jerusalem](#), raised him to the [priesthood](#). Demetrius, although he had given letters of recommendation to Origen, was very much offended by this [ordination](#), which had taken place without his [knowledge](#) and, as he thought, in derogation of his [rights](#). If [Eusebius](#) (VI, viii) is to be believed, he was [envious](#) of the increasing influence of his catechist. So, on his return to [Alexandria](#), Origen soon perceived that his [bishop](#) was rather unfriendly towards him. He yielded to the storm and quitted [Egypt](#) (231). The details of this affair were recorded by [Eusebius](#) in the lost second book of the "Apology for Origen"; according to Photius, who had read the work, two councils were held at [Alexandria](#), one of which pronounced a [decree](#) of banishment against Origen while the other deposed him from the [priesthood](#) (Biblioth. cod. 118). [St. Jerome](#) declares expressly that he was not condemned on a point of [doctrine](#).

### Origen at Caesarea (232)

Expelled from [Alexandria](#), Origen fixed his abode at Caesarea in Palestine (232), with his protector and friend Theoctistus, founded a new [school](#) there, and resumed his "Commentary on St. John" at the point where it had been interrupted. He was soon surrounded by pupils. The most distinguished of these, without [doubt](#), was [St. Gregory Thaumaturgus](#) who, with his brother Apollodorus, attended Origen's lectures for five years and delivered on leaving him a celebrated "Farewell Address". During the [persecution](#) of Maximinus (235-37) Origen visited his friend, St. Firmilian, [Bishop](#) of [Caesarea](#) in Cappadocia, who made him remain for a long period. On this occasion he was hospitably entertained by a [Christian](#) lady of Caesarea, named Juliana, who had inherited the writing of Symmachus, the translator of the [Old Testament](#) (Palladius, "Hist. Laus.", 147). The years following were devoted almost uninterruptedly to the composition of the "Commentaries". Mention is made only of a few excursions to Holy Places, a journey to Athens ([Eusebius](#), VI, xxii), and two voyages to [Arabia](#), one of which was undertaken for the conversion of Beryllus, a [Patripassian](#) ([Eusebius](#), VI, xxiii; [St. Jerome](#), *Illustrious Men* 60), the other to refute certain [heretics](#) who denied the [Resurrection](#) ([Eusebius](#), *Church History* VI.37). Age did not diminish his activities. He was over sixty when he wrote his "Contra Celsum" and his "Commentary on St. Matthew". The [persecution](#) of [Decius](#) (250) prevented him from continuing these works. Origen was [imprisoned](#) and barbarously tortured, but his [courage](#) was unshaken and from his [prison](#) he wrote letters breathing the spirit of the [martyrs](#) ([Eusebius](#), *Church History* VI.39). He was still alive on the death of [Decius](#) (251), but only lingering on, and he died, probably, from the results of the sufferings endured during the [persecution](#) (253 or 254), at the age of sixty-nine ([Eusebius](#), *Church History* VII.1). His last days were spent at Tyr, though his reason for retiring thither is unknown. He was [buried](#) with [honour](#) as a confessor of the Faith. For a long time his sepulchre, behind the high-altar of the [cathedral](#) of Tyr, was visited by [pilgrims](#). Today, as nothing remains of this [cathedral](#) except a mass of ruins, the



exact location of his [tomb](#) is unknown.

## Works

Very few authors were as fertile as Origen. [St. Epiphanius](#) estimates at six thousand the number of his writings, counting separately, without [doubt](#), the different books of a single work, his [homilies](#), letters, and his smallest treatises (Haeres., LXIV, lxiii). This figure, repeated by many [ecclesiastical](#) writers, seems greatly exaggerated. [St. Jerome](#) assures us that the list of Origen's writings drawn up by St. Pamphilus did not contain even two thousand titles (Contra Rufin., II, xxii; III, xxiii); but this list was evidently incomplete. [Eusebius](#) (*Church History* VI.32) had inserted it in his biography of St. Pamphilus and [St. Jerome](#) inserted it in a letter to Paula.

## Exegetical writings

Origen had devoted three kinds of works to the explanation of the [Holy Scripture](#): commentaries, [homilies](#), and scholia (St. Jerome, "Prologus interpret. homiliar. Orig. in Ezechiel"). The commentaries (*tomoi libri, volumina*) were a continuous and well-developed interpretation of the inspired text. An [idea](#) of their magnitude may be formed from the fact that the words of St. John: "In the beginning was the Word", furnished material for a whole roll. There remain in Greek only eight books of the "Commentary on St. Matthew", and nine books of the "Commentary on St. John"; in Latin an anonymous translation of the "Commentary on St. Matthew" beginning with chapter xvi, three books and a half of the "Commentary on the Canticle of Canticles" translated by Rufinus, and an abridgment of the "Commentary on the Epistles to the Romans" by the same translator. The [homilies](#) (*homiliai, homiliae, tractatus*) were familiar discourses on texts of Scripture, often extemporary and recorded as well as possible by stenographers. The list is long and undoubtedly must have been longer if it be [true](#) that Origen, as St. Pamphilus declares in his "Apology" preached almost every day. There remain in Greek twenty-one (twenty on [Jeremias](#) and the celebrated [homily](#) on the [witch](#) of Endor); in Latin, one hundred and eighteen translated by Rufinus, seventy-eight translated by [St. Jerome](#) and some others of more or less [doubtful](#) authenticity, preserved in a collection of [homilies](#). The twenty "Tractatus Origenis" recently discovered are not the work of Origen, though use has been made of his writings. Origen has been called the father of the [homily](#); it was he who contributed most to popularize this species of literature in which are to be found so many instructive details on the customs of the primitive Church, its institutions, discipline, liturgy, and [sacraments](#). The scholia (*scholia, excerpta, commaticum interpretandi genus*) were [exegetical](#), philological, or historical notes, on words or passages of the [Bible](#), like the annotations of the Alexandria grammarians on the profane writers. Except some few short fragments all of these have perished.

## Other writings

We now possess only two of Origen's letters: one addressed to [St. Gregory Thaumaturgus](#) on the reading of [Holy Scripture](#), the other to [Julius Africanus](#) on the Greek additions to the Book of Daniel. Two *opuscula* have been preserved entire in the original form; an excellent treatise "On Prayer" and an "Exhortation to Martyrdom", sent by Origen to his friend [Ambrose](#), then a [prisoner](#) for the Faith. Finally two large works have escaped the ravages of time: the "[Contra Celsum](#)" in the original text, and the "[De principiis](#)" in a Latin translation by Rufinus and in the citations of the "Philocalia" which might equal in contents one-sixth of the whole work. In the eight books of the "[Contra Celsum](#)" Origen follows his adversary point by point, refuting in detail each of his [false](#) imputations. It is a model of reasoning, erudition, and honest polemic. The "[De principiis](#)", composed at [Alexandria](#), and which, it seems, got into the hands of the public before its completion, treated successively in its four books, allowing for numerous digressions, of: (a) [God](#) and the Trinity, (b) the world and its relation to [God](#), (c) man and his [free will](#), (d) Scripture, its inspiration and interpretation. Many other works of Origen have been entirely lost: for instance, the treatise in two books "On the Resurrection", a treatise "On Free Will", and ten books of "Miscellaneous Writings" (*Stromateis*). For Origen's critical work see [HEXAPLA](#).

## Posthumous influence of Origen

During his lifetime Origen by his writings, teaching, and intercourse exercised very great influence. St. Firmilian of Caesarea in Cappadocia, who regarded himself as his disciple, made him remain with him for a long period to profit by his learning ([Eusebius](#), *Church History* VI.26; [Palladius](#), "Hist. Laus.", 147). [St. Alexander of Jerusalem](#) his fellow pupil at the [catechetical school](#) was his intimate faithful friend ([Eusebius](#), VI, xiv), as was Theoctistus of Caesarea in Palestine, who [ordained](#) him ([Photius](#), cod. 118). Beryllus of [Bostra](#), whom he had won back from [heresy](#), was deeply attached to him ([Eusebius](#), VI, xxxiii; [St. Jerome](#), *Illustrious Men* 60). St. Anatolus of [Laodicea](#) sang his praises in his "Carmen Paschale" (P.G., X, 210). The learned [Julius Africanus](#) consulted him, Origen's reply being extant (P.G., XI, 41-85). [St. Hippolytus](#) highly appreciated his talents (St. Jerome, *Illustrious Men* 61). St. Dionysius, his pupil and successor in the [catechetical school](#), when [Patriarch](#) of [Alexandria](#), dedicated to him his treatise "On the Persecution" ([Eusebius](#), VI, xlvii), and on learning of his death wrote a letter filled with his praises ([Photius](#), cod. 232). [St. Gregory Thaumaturgus](#), who had been his pupil for five years at [Caesarea](#), before leaving addressed to him his celebrated "Farewell Address" (P.G., X, 1049-1104), an enthusiastic panegyric. There is no [proof](#) that Heracles, his disciple, colleague, and successor in the [catechetical school](#), before being raised to the Patriarchate of [Alexandria](#), wavered in his sworn friendship. Origen's name was so highly esteemed that when there was a question of putting an end to a [schism](#) or rooting out a [heresy](#), appeal was made to it.

After his death his [reputation](#) continued to spread. St. Pamphilus, [martyred](#) in 307, composes with [Eusebius](#) an "Apology for Origen" in six books the first alone of which has been preserved in a Latin translation by Rufinus (P.G., XVII, 541-616). Origen had at that time many other apologists whose names are unknown to us ([Photius](#), cod. 117 and 118). The directors of the [catechetical school](#) continued to walk in his footsteps. Theognostus, in his "Hypotyposes", followed him even too closely, according to Photius (cod. 106), though his action was approved by [St. Athanasius](#). Pierius was called by [St. Jerome](#) "Origenes junior" (*Illustrious Men* 76). Didymus the Blind composed a work to explain and justify the teaching of the "[De principiis](#)" (St. Jerome, "Adv. Rufin.", I, vi). St. Athanasius does not hesitate to cite him with praise (Epist. IV ad Serapion., 9 and 10) and points out that he must be interpreted generously (De decretis Nic., 27).

Nor was the admiration for the great Alexandrian less outside of [Egypt](#). [St. Gregory of Nazianzus](#) gave significant expression to his opinion (Suidas, "Lexicon", ed. Bernhardt, II, 1274: *Origenes he panton hemon achone*). In collaboration with [St. Basil](#), he had published, under the title "Philocalia", a volume of selections from the master. In his "Panegyric on St. Gregory Thaumaturgus", [St. Gregory of Nyssa](#) called Origen the prince of [Christian](#) learning in the third century (P.G., XLVI, 905). At Caesarea in Palestine the admiration of the learned for Origen became a passion. St. Pamphilus wrote his "Apology", Euzoius had his writings transcribed on parchment (St. Jerome, *Illustrious Men* 93). [Eusebius](#) catalogued them carefully and drew upon them largely. Nor were the Latins less enthusiastic than the Greeks. According to [St. Jerome](#), the principal Latin imitators of Origen are [St. Eusebius of Vercell](#), [St. Hilary of Poitiers](#), and [St. Ambrose of Milan](#); [St. Victorinus](#) of Pettau had set them the example (St. Jerome, "Adv. Rufin.", I, ii; "Ad Augustin. Epist.", cxii, 20). Origen's writings were so much drawn upon that the solitary of Bethlehem called it plagiarism, *furta Latinarum*. However, excepting Rufinus, who is practically only a translator, [St. Jerome](#) is perhaps the Latin writer who is most indebted to Origen. Before the Origenist controversies he willingly admitted this, and even afterwards, he did not entirely repudiate it; cf. the prologues to his translations of Origen (Homilies on St. Luke, [Jeremias](#), and [Ezechiel](#), the Canticle of Canticles), and also the prefaces to his own "Commentaries" (on [Micheas](#), the Epistles to the Galatians, and to the Ephesians etc.).

Amidst these expressions of admiration and praise, a few discordant voices were heard. St. Methodius, [bishop](#) and [martyr](#) (311), had written several works against Origen, amongst others a treatise "On the Resurrection", of which [St. Epiphanius](#) cites a long extract (Haeres., LXVI, xii-lxii). [St. Eustathius](#) of Antioch, who died in exile about 337, criticized his allegorism (P.G., XVIII, 613-673). St. Alexander of [Alexandria](#), [martyred](#) in 311, also attacked him, if we are to credit [Leontius of Byzantium](#) and the emperor Justinian. But his chief adversaries were the [heretics](#), Sabellians, [Arians](#), [Pelagians](#), [Nestorians](#), [Apollinarians](#).



## Origenism

By this term is understood not so much Origen's [theology](#) and the body of his teachings, as a certain number of doctrines, rightly or wrongly attributed to him, and which by their novelty or their danger called forth at an early period a refutation from [orthodox](#) writers. They are chiefly:

- Allegorism in the interpretation of Scripture
- Subordination of the Divine Persons
- The theory of successive trials and a final restoration.

Before examining how far Origen is responsible for these theories, a word must be said of the directive principle of his [theology](#).

### The Church and the Rule of Faith

In the preface to the "[De principiis](#)" Origen laid down a rule thus formulated in the translation of Rufinus: "Illa sola credenda est veritas quae in nullo ab ecclesiastica et apostolica discordat traditione". The same norm is expressed almost in equivalent terms in many other passages, e.g., "non debemus credere nisi quemadmodum per successionem Ecclesiae Dei tradiderunt nobis (In Matt., ser. 46, [Migne](#), XIII, 1667). In accordance with those principles Origen constantly appeals to [ecclesiastical](#) preaching, [ecclesiastical](#) teaching, and the [ecclesiastical rule of faith](#) (*kanon*). He accepts only four Canonical Gospels because tradition does not receive more; he admits the necessity of [baptism](#) of infants because it is in accordance with the practice of the [Church](#) founded on [Apostolic tradition](#); he warns the interpreter of the [Holy Scripture](#), not to rely on his own judgment, but "on the rule of the [Church](#) instituted by Christ". For, he adds, we have only two lights to guide us here below, [Christ](#) and the [Church](#); the [Church](#) reflects faithfully the light received from [Christ](#), as the moon reflects the rays of the sun. The distinctive mark of the [Catholic](#) is to belong to the [Church](#), to depend on the [Church](#) outside of which there is no [salvation](#); on the contrary, he who leaves the [Church](#) walks in darkness, he is a [heretic](#). It is through the principle of authority that Origen is wont to unmask and combat [doctrinal errors](#). It is the principle of authority, too, that he invokes when he enumerates the [dogmas](#) of [faith](#). A man animated with such sentiments may have made mistakes, because he is human, but his disposition of mind is essentially [Catholic](#) and he does not deserve to be ranked among the promoters of [heresy](#).

### Scriptural allegorism

The principal passages on the inspiration, meaning, and interpretation of the Scriptures are preserved in Greek in the first fifteen chapters of the "Philocalia". According to Origen, Scripture is inspired because it is the word and work of [God](#). But, far from being an inert instrument, the inspired author has full possession of his faculties, he is conscious of what he is writing; he is physically free to deliver his message or not; he is not seized by a passing delirium like the [pagan](#) oracles, for bodily disorder, disturbance of the senses, momentary loss of reason are but so many [proofs](#) of the action of the [evil spirit](#). Since Scripture is from [God](#), it ought to have the distinctive characteristics of the Divine works: [truth](#), unity, and fullness. The word of [God](#) cannot possibly be [untrue](#); hence no [errors](#) or contradictions can be admitted in Scripture (*Commentary on John* X.3). The author of the Scriptures being one, the [Bible](#) is less a collection of books than one and the same book (Philoc., V, iv-vii), a perfect harmonious instrument (Philoc., VI, i-ii). But the most Divine note of Scripture is its fullness: "There is not in the Holy Books the smallest passage (*cheraia*) but reflects the wisdom of [God](#)" (Philoc., I, xxviii, cf. X, i). True there are imperfections in the [Bible](#): antilogies, repetitions, want of continuity; but these imperfections become perfections by leading us to the allegory and the spiritual meaning (Philoc., X, i-ii).

At one time Origen, starting from the [Platonic](#) trichotomy, distinguishes the *body*, the *soul*, and the *spirit* of [Holy Scripture](#); at another, following a more rational terminology, he distinguishes only between the letter and the spirit. In reality, the *soul*, or the psychic signification, or *moral* meaning (that is the *moral* parts of Scripture, and the *moral applications* of the other parts) plays only a very secondary rôle, and we can confine ourselves to the antithesis: *letter* (or *body*) and *spirit*. Unfortunately this antithesis is not free from equivocation. Origen does not understand by letter (or body) what we mean today by the literal sense, but the grammatical sense, the proper as opposed to the figurative meaning. Just so he does not attach to the words spiritual meaning the same signification as we do: for him they mean the spiritual sense properly so called (the meaning added to the literal sense by the express wish of [God](#) attaching a special signification to the fact related or the manner of relating them), or the figurative as contrasted with the proper sense, or the accommodative sense, often an arbitrary invention of the interpreter, or even the literal sense when it is treating of things spiritual. If this terminology is kept in mind there is nothing absurd in the principle he repeats so often: "Such a passage of the Scripture as no corporal meaning." As examples Origen cites the [anthropomorphisms](#), metaphors, and symbols which ought indeed to be understood figuratively.

Though he warns us that these passages are the exceptions, it must be confessed that he allows too many cases in which the Scripture is not to be understood according to the letter; but, remembering his terminology, his principle is unimpeachable. The two great rules of interpretation laid down by the Alexandria catechist, taken by themselves and independently of [erroneous](#) applications, are [proof](#) against criticism. They may be formulated thus:

- Scripture must be interpreted in a manner worthy of [God](#), the author of Scripture.
- The corporal sense or the letter of Scripture must not be adopted, when it would entail anything impossible, absurd, or unworthy of [God](#).

The abuse arises from the application of these rules. Origen has recourse too easily to allegorism to explain purely apparent antilogies or antinomies. He considers that certain narratives or ordinances of the [Bible](#) would be unworthy of [God](#) if they had to be taken according to the letter, or if they were to be taken *solely* according to the letter. He justifies the allegorism by the fact that otherwise certain accounts or certain [precepts](#) now abrogated would be useless and profitless for the reader: a fact which appears to him contrary to the providence of the Divine inspirer and the dignity of [Holy Writ](#). It will thus be seen that though the criticisms directed against his allegorical method by [St. Epiphanius](#) and [St. Methodius](#) were not groundless, yet many of the complaints arise from a misunderstanding.

### Subordination of the divine persons

The three Persons of the Trinity are distinguished from all creatures by the three following characteristics: absolute immateriality, omniscience, and substantial [sanctity](#). As is well known many ancient [ecclesiastical](#) writers attributed to created spirits an aerial or ethereal envelope without which they could not act. Though he does not venture to decide categorically, Origen inclines to this view, but, as soon as there is a question of the Divine Persons, he is perfectly sure that they have no body and are not in a body; and this characteristic belongs to the Trinity alone (*De Principiis* IV.27, I.6, II.2.2, II.4.3, etc.). Again the [knowledge](#) of every creature, being essentially limited, is always imperfect and capable of being increased. But it would be repugnant for the Divine Persons to pass from the state of [ignorance](#) to [knowledge](#). How could the Son, who is the Wisdom of the Father, be [ignorant](#) of anything (*Commentary on John* I.27; *Against Celsus* VI.17). Nor can we admit [ignorance](#) in the Spirit who "searcheth the deep things of [God](#)" (*De Principiis* I.5.4, I.6.2, I.7.3; "In Num. him.", XI, 8 etc.). As substantial [holiness](#) is the exclusive privilege of the Trinity so also is it the only source of all created [holiness](#). Sin is forgiven only by the simultaneous concurrence of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Ghost; no one is sanctified at [baptism](#) save through their common action; the *soul* in which the Holy Ghost indwells possesses likewise the Son and the Father. In a word the three Persons of the Trinity are indivisible in their being, their presence, and their operation.

Along with these perfectly [orthodox](#) texts there are some which must be interpreted with diligence, remembering as we ought that the language of [theology](#) was not yet fixed and that Origen was often the first to face these difficult problems. It will then appear that the subordination of the Divine Persons, so much urged against Origen, generally consists in differences of appropriation (the Father creator, the Son redeemer, the Spirit sanctifier)



which seem to attribute to the Persons an unequal sphere of action, or in the [liturgical](#) practice of [praying](#) the Father *through* the Son in the Holy Ghost, or in the theory so widespread in the [Greek Church](#) of the first five centuries, that the Father has a pre-eminence of rank (*taxis*) over the two other Persons, inasmuch as in mentioning them He ordinarily has the first place, and of dignity (*axioma*) because He represents the whole Divinity, of which He is the principle (*arche*), the origin (*aitios*), and the source (*pege*). That is why St. Athanasius defends Origen's [orthodoxy](#) concerning the Trinity and why St. Basil and [St. Gregory of Nazianzus](#) replied to the [heretics](#) who claimed the support of his authority that they misunderstood him.

### *The origin and destiny of rational beings*

Here we encounter an unfortunate amalgam of [philosophy](#) and [theology](#). The system that results is not coherent, for Origen, frankly recognizing the contradiction of the incompatible elements that he is trying to unify, recoils from the consequences, protests against the [logical](#) conclusions, and oftentimes corrects by [orthodox](#) professions of [faith](#) the [heterodoxy](#) of his speculations. It must be said that almost all the texts about to be treated of, are contained in the "[De principiis](#)", where the author treads on most dangerous ground. The system may be reduced to a few hypotheses, the [error](#) and danger of which were not recognized by Origen.

#### *(1) Eternity of Creation*

Whatever exists outside of [God](#) was created by Him: the Alexandrian catechist always defended this thesis most energetically against the [pagan philosophers](#) who admitted an uncreated matter ([De Principiis](#) II.1.5; "In Genes.", I, 12, in [Migne](#), XII, 48-9). But he believes that [God](#) created from [eternity](#), for "it is absurd", he says, "to imagine the nature of [God](#) inactive, or His [goodness](#) inefficacious, or His dominion without subjects" ([De Principiis](#) III.5.3). Consequently he is forced to admit a double [infinite](#) series of worlds before and after the present world.

#### *(2) Original Equality of the Created Spirits.*

"In the beginning all [intellectual](#) natures were created equal and alike, as [God](#) had no motive for creating them otherwise" ([De Principiis](#) II.9.6). Their present differences arise solely from their different use of the gift of [free will](#). The spirits created good and [happy](#) grew tired of their [happiness](#) (op. cit., I, iii, 8), and, though carelessness, fell, some more some less (I, vi, 2). Hence the [hierarchy](#) of the [angels](#); hence also the four categories of created intellects: [angels](#), stars (supposing, as is probable, that they are animated, [De Principiis](#) I.7.3), men, and demons. But their rôles may be one day changed; for what [free will](#) has done, [free will](#) can undo, and the Trinity alone is essentially immutable in good.

#### *(3) Essence and Raison d'Être of Matter*

Matter exists only for the spiritual; if the spiritual did not need it, matter would not exist, for its finality is not in itself. But it seems to Origen - though he does not venture to declare so expressly - that created spirits even the most perfect cannot do without an extremely diluted and subtle matter which serves them as a vehicle and means of action ([De Principiis](#) II.2.1, I.6.4, etc.). Matter was, therefore, created simultaneously with the spiritual, although the spiritual is [logically](#) prior; and matter will never cease to be because the spiritual, however perfect, will always need it. But matter which is susceptible of indefinite transformations is adapted to the varying condition of the spirits. "When intended for the more imperfect spirits, it becomes solidified, thickens, and forms the bodies of this visible world. If it is serving higher intelligences, it shines with the brightness of the celestial bodies and serves as a garb for the [angels of God](#), and the [children of the Resurrection](#)" ([De Principiis](#) II.2.2).

#### *(4) Universality of the Redemption and the Final Restoration*

Certain Scriptural texts, e.g., [1 Corinthians 15:25-28](#), seem to extend to all rational beings the benefit of the Redemption, and Origen allows himself to be led also by the [philosophical](#) principle which he enunciates several times, without ever proving it, that the end is always like the beginning: "We think that the [goodness of God](#), through the mediation of [Christ](#), will bring all creatures to one and the same end" ([De Principiis](#) I.6.1-3). The universal restoration (*apokatastasis*) follows necessarily from these principles.

On the least reflection, it will be seen that these hypotheses, starting from contrary points of view, are irreconcilable: for the theory of a final restoration is diametrically opposed to the theory of successive indefinite trials. It would be easy to find in the writings of Origen a mass of texts contradicting these principles and destroying the resulting conclusions. He affirms, for instance, that the charity of the [elect](#) in [heaven](#) does not fail; in their case "the freedom of the will will be bound so that [sin](#) will be impossible" (In Roman., V, 10). So, too, the reprobate will always be fixed in [evil](#), less from the inability to free themselves from it, than because they wish to be [evil](#) ([De Principiis](#) I.8.4), for malice has become natural to them, it is as a second nature in them (In Joann., xx, 19). Origen grew angry when accused of teaching the [eternal salvation](#) of the devil. But the hypotheses which he lays down here and there are none the less worthy of censure. What can be said in his defence, if it be not with St. Athanasius (De decretis Nic., 27), that we must not seek to find his real opinion in the works in which he discusses the arguments for and against [doctrine](#) as an [intellectual](#) exercise or amusement; or, with [St. Jerome](#) (Ad Pamach. Epist., XLVIII, 12), that it is one thing to dogmatize and another to enunciate hypothetical opinions which will be cleared up by discussion?

## **Origenist controversies**

The discussions concerning Origen and his teaching are of a very singular and very complex character. They break out unexpectedly, at long intervals, and assume an immense importance quite unforeseen in their [humble](#) beginnings. They are complicated by so many personal disputes and so many questions foreign to the fundamental subject in controversy that a brief and rapid *exposé* of the polemics is difficult and well-nigh impossible. Finally they abate so suddenly that one is forced to conclude that the controversy was superficial and that Origen's [orthodoxy](#) was not the sole point in dispute.

### *First Origenist Crisis*

It broke out in the [deserts](#) of [Egypt](#), raged in [Palestine](#), and ended at Constantinople with the condemnation of [St. Chrysostom](#) (392-404). During the second half of the fourth century the [monks](#) of Nitria professed an exaggerated enthusiasm for Origen, whilst the neighbouring brethren of Sceta, as a result of an unwarranted reaction and an excessive fear of allegorism, fell into [Anthropomorphism](#). These [doctrinal](#) discussions gradually invaded the [monasteries](#) of [Palestine](#), which were under the care of [St. Epiphanius](#), [Bishop of Salamis](#), who, convinced of the dangers of Origenism, had combatted it in his works and was determined to prevent its spread and to extirpate it completely. Having gone to Jerusalem in 394, he preached vehemently against Origen's [errors](#), in presence of the [bishop](#) of that city, John, who was deemed an Origenist. John in turn spoke against [Anthropomorphism](#), directing his discourse so clearly against Epiphanius that no one could be mistaken. Another incident soon helped to embitter the dispute. Epiphanius had raised Paulinian, brother of [St. Jerome](#), to the [priesthood](#) in a place subject to the See of [Jerusalem](#). John complained bitterly of this violation of his [rights](#), and the reply of Epiphanius was not of a nature to appease him.

Two new combatants were now ready to enter the lists. From the time when Jerome and Rufinus settled, one at Bethlehem and the other at Mt. Olivet, they had lived in brotherly friendship. Both admired, imitated, and translated Origen, and were on most amicable terms with their [bishop](#), when in 392 Aterbius, a [monk](#) of Sceta, came to Jerusalem and accused them of both of Origenism. [St. Jerome](#), very sensitive to the question of [orthodoxy](#), was much hurt by the insinuation of Aterbius and two years later sided with [St. Epiphanius](#), whose reply to John of Jerusalem he translated into Latin. Rufinus learnt, it is not known how, of this translation, which was not intended for the public, and Jerome suspected him of having obtained it by [fraud](#). A reconciliation was effected sometime later, but it was not lasting. In 397 Rufinus, then at [Rome](#), had translated Origen's "[De principiis](#)" into Latin, and in his preface followed the example of [St. Jerome](#), whose dithyrambic eulogy addressed to the Alexandrian catechist he remembered. The solitary of Bethlehem, grievously hurt at this action, wrote to his



friends to refute the perfidious implication of Rufinus, denounced Origen's **errors** to Pope Anastasius, tried to win the **Patriarch** of **Alexandria** over to the anti-Origenist cause, and began a discussion with Rufinus, marked with great bitterness on both sides.

Until 400 Theophilus of **Alexandria** was an acknowledged Origenist. His confidant was Isidore, a former **monk** of Nitria, and his friends, "the Tall Brothers", the accredited leaders of the Origenist party. He had supported John of Jerusalem against **St. Epiphanius**, whose **Anthropomorphism** he denounced to **Pope Siricius**. Suddenly he changed his views, exactly why was never known. It is said that the **monks** of Sceta, displeased with his paschal letter of 399, forcibly invaded his episcopal residence and threatened him with death if he did not chant the palinody. What is certain is that he had quarreled with St. Isidore over money matters and with "the Tall Brothers", who blamed his **avarice** and his worldliness. As Isidore and "the Tall Brothers" had retired to Constantinople, where Chrysostom extended his hospitality to them and interceded for them, without, however, admitting them to communion till the censures pronounced against them had been raised, the irascible **Patriarch** of **Alexandria** determined on this plan: to suppress Origenism everywhere, and under this pretext ruin Chrysostom, whom he **hated** and **envied**. For four years he was mercilessly active: he condemned Origen's books at the **Council of Alexandria** (400), with an armed band he expelled the **monks** from Nitria, he wrote to the **bishops** of **Cyprus** and Palestine to win them over to his anti-Origenist crusade, issued paschal letters in 401, 402, and 404 against Origen's **doctrine**, and sent a missive to Pope Anastasius asking for the condemnation of Origenism. He was successful beyond his hopes; the **bishops** of **Cyprus** accepted his invitation. Those of Palestine, assembled at **Jerusalem**, condemned the **errors** pointed out to them, adding that they were not taught amongst them. Anastasius, while declaring that Origen was entirely unknown to him, condemned the propositions extracted from his books. **St. Jerome** undertook to translate into Latin the various elucidations of the patriarch, even his virulent diatribe against Chrysostom. **St. Epiphanius**, preceding Theophilus to Constantinople, treated St. Chrysostom as temerarious, and almost **heretical**, until the day the **truth** began to dawn on him, and suspecting that he might have been deceived, he suddenly left Constantinople and died at sea before arriving at **Salamis**.

It is well known how Theophilus, having been called by the emperor to explain his conduct towards Isidore and "the Tall Brothers", cleverly succeeded by his machinations in changing the rôles. Instead of being the accused, he became the accuser, and summoned Chrysostom to appear before the conciliabule of the Oak (ad Quercum), at which Chrysostom was condemned. As soon as the vengeance of Theophilus was satiated nothing more was heard of Origenism. The **Patriarch** of **Alexandria** began to read Origen, pretending that he could cull the roses from among the thorns. He became reconciled with "the Tall Brothers" without asking them to retract. Hardly had the personal quarrels abated when the spectre of Origenism vanished.

### Second Origenistic Crisis

In 514 certain heterodox doctrines of a very singular character had already spread among the **monks** of **Jerusalem** and its environs. Possibly the seeds of the dispute may have been sown by Stephen Bar-Sudaili, a troublesome **monk** expelled from **Edessa**, who joined to an Origenism of his own brand certain clearly **pantheistic** views. Plotting and intriguing continued for about thirty years, the **monks** suspected of Origenism being in turn expelled from their **monasteries**, then readmitted, only to be driven out anew. Their leaders and protectors were Nonnus, who till his death in 547 kept the party together, Theodore Askidas and Domitian who had won the favour of the emperor and were named **bishops**, one to the See of **Ancyra** in Galatia, the other to that of Caesarea in Cappadocia, though they continued to reside at court (537). In these circumstances a report against Origenism was addressed to Justinian, by whom and on what occasion it is not known, for the two accounts that have come down to us are at variance (Cyrillus of **Scythopolis**, "Vita Sabae"; and Liberatus, "Breviarium", xxiii). At all events, the emperor then wrote his "Liber adversus Origenem", containing in addition to an *exposé* of the reasons for condemning it twenty-four censurable texts taken from the "**De principiis**", and lastly ten propositions to be **anathematized**. Justinian ordered the patriarch **Mennas** to call together all the **bishops** present in Constantinople and make them subscribe to these **anathemas**. This was the local synod (*synodos endemousa*) of 543. A copy of the imperial edict had been addressed to the other **patriarchs**, including **Pope Vigilius**, and all gave their adhesion to it. In the case of Vigilius especially we have the testimony of Liberatus (Breviar., xxiii) and **Cassiodorus** (Institutiones, 1).

It had been expected that Domitian and Theodore Askidas, by their refusal to condemn Origenism, would fall into disfavour at Court; but they signed whatever they were asked to sign and remained more powerful than ever. Askidas even took revenge by persuading the emperor to have **Theodore of Mopsuestia**, who was deemed the sworn enemy of Origen, condemned (Liberatus, "Breviar.", xxiv; Facundas of Hermianus, "Defensio trium capitul.", I, ii; **Evagrius**, "Hist.", IV, xxviii). Justinian's new edict, which is not extant, resulted in the assembling of the fifth **ecumenical council**, in which **Theodore of Mopsuestia**, Ibas, and Theodoretus were condemned (553).

Were Origen and Origenism **anathematized**? Many learned writers believe so; an equal number deny that they were condemned; most modern authorities are either undecided or reply with reservations. Relying on the most recent studies on the question it may be held that:

1. It is **certain** that the fifth general council was convoked exclusively to deal with the affair of the **Three Chapters**, and that neither Origen nor Origenism were the cause of it.
2. It is **certain** that the council opened on 5 May, 553, in spite of the protestations of **Pope Vigilius**, who though at Constantinople refused to attend it, and that in the eight conciliary sessions (from 5 May to 2 June), the Acts of which we possess, only the question of the **Three Chapters** is treated.
3. Finally it is **certain** that only the Acts concerning the affair of the **Three Chapters** were submitted to the **pope** for his approval, which was given on 8 December, 553, and 23 February, 554.
4. It is a fact that Popes Vigilius, **Pelagius I** (556-61), **Pelagius II** (579-90), **Gregory the Great** (590-604), in treating of the fifth council deal only with the **Three Chapters**, make no mention of Origenism, and speak as if they did not **know** of its condemnation.
5. It must be admitted that before the opening of the council, which had been delayed by the resistance of the **pope**, the **bishops** already assembled at Constantinople had to consider, by order of the emperor, a form of Origenism that had practically nothing in common with Origen, but which was held, we **know**, by one of the Origenist parties in Palestine. The arguments in corroboration of this hypothesis may be found in Dickamp (op. cit., 66-141).
6. The **bishops** certainly subscribed to the fifteen **anathemas** proposed by the emperor (ibid., 90-96); and admitted Origenist, Theodore of **Scythopolis**, was forced to retract (ibid., 125-129); but there is no **proof** that the **approbation** of the **pope**, who was at that time protesting against the convocation of the council, was asked.
7. It is easy to understand how this extra-conciliary sentence was mistaken at a later period for a **decree** of the actual **ecumenical council**.





### About this page

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## A Chronology of Scripture

**listing the events in the history of the canon and ancient versions of Scripture, and of the place of Scripture in the church and in society.**

- 1921. Abraham arrives in Canaan.
- 1898. Destruction of Sodom.
- 1897. Birth of Isaac.
- 1837. Birth of Jacob and Esau.
- 1760. Isaac blesses Jacob. Jacob flees to Haran.
- 1750. Birth of Judah.
- 1739. Jacob wrestles with the Angel at Peniel, who gives him the name Israel.
- 1689. Death of Israel in Egypt.
- 1520. *Book of Job* written (?)
- 1491. Moses called at the burning bush. Exodus from Egypt. Law given from Mount Sinai.
- 1470. *Genesis, Exodus, Leviticus, Numbers* probably written by now.
- 1451. *Deuteronomy* written. Death of Moses.
- 1426. *Joshua* written. Death of Joshua.
  
- 1165. Hannah presents the boy Samuel to Eli.
- 1095. Saul anointed king by Samuel.
- 1056. Death of Saul. David becomes king.
- 1017. David numbers the people of Israel. Seventy thousand die of pestilence.
- 1015. Death of David. Solomon becomes king. *Psalms, Judges* and *Ruth* written by now.
- 1004. Solomon dedicates the Temple. *Proverbs, Ecclesiastes, Song of Songs* written.
- 984. Solomon builds heathen shrines for his wives.
- 975. Death of Solomon. Rehoboam becomes king in Jerusalem and plays the tyrant.
- 974. Jeroboam wrests 10 tribes of the North from Rehoboam and builds rival altar in Bethel.
- 925. *First* and *Second Samuel* written about now.
- 910. Elijah preaches against king Ahab in the North.
- 899. Naboth robbed and murdered by Jezebel.
- 855. *Obadiah* begins to preach.
- 800. *Joel* begins to preach (?)
- 785. *Jonah* begins to preach.
- 760. *Amos* begins to preach.
- 750. *Hosea* begins to preach.
- 740. *Isaiah* begins to preach.
- 730. *Micah* begins to preach about now.
- 726. Hezekiah becomes king of Judah, purges the land of idols.
- 722. Fall of the Northern kingdom to Assyrians. The 10 tribes taken into captivity.
- 710. Sennacherib invades Judea.
- 681. Death of Isaiah.
- 678. Samaria colonized by Assyrians.
- 650. Manasseh, king of Judah, taken captive to Babylon.
- 641. Josiah proclaimed king at 8 years of age.
- 630. *Zephaniah* begins to preach about now.
- 627. *Jeremiah* begins to preach.
- 624. Reformation of religion begun under Josiah.
- 621. Josiah purifies the Temple. Book of the Law discovered there.
- 615. *Nahum* begins to preach about now.
- 609. Death of Josiah in battle.
- 606. *Habakkuk* begins to preach about now.
- 605. *Daniel* begins to preach.
- 593. *Ezekiel* begins to preach.
- 586. Jerusalem destroyed by Babylonian army of Nebuchadnezzar.
- 580. Thousands of Jews exiled. *Lamentations* written. Death of Jeremiah.
- 550. *First* and *Second Kings* written about now.
- 538. Capture of Babylon by Persian army of Cyrus.
- 536. First return of Jewish exiles to Jerusalem with Zerubbabel.



- 530. Death of Daniel.
- 527. Death of Cyrus.
- 520. *Zechariah* and *Haggai* begin to preach.
- 515. Temple rebuilt by now.
- 490. Persians defeated by Greeks at Battle of Marathon.
- 480. Events of Book of Esther.
- 460. *Esther* written.
- 458. Return of Jewish exiles to Jerusalem with Ezra.
- 440. *First* and *Second Chronicles* and *Ezra* written. *Malachi* begins to preach.
- 432. Return of more Jewish exiles with Nehemiah. Samaritans establish rival temple. *Nehemiah* written.
- 424. Death of Persian king Artaxerxes I and succession of Darius II.
- 400. Death of Nehemiah.
- 336. Accession of Darius III, last of the Persian kings. Alexander succeeds Philip as king of Macedonia.
- 332. Alexander the Great arrives in Jerusalem.
- 331. Alexander defeats Persian army at Battle of Arbela.
- 323. Death of Alexander the Great and division of his empire.
- 320. Ptolemy Soter (Greek king of Egypt) annexes Judea.
- 283. Ptolemy Philadelphus reigns in Egypt.
- 250. [Septuagint version](#) of the Pentateuch published.
- 223. Antiochus the Great reigns over Syria.
- 200. *Tobit*, *Epistle of Jeremiah* and *Ecclesiasticus* written. *Letter of Aristeas* written.
- 198. Antiochus the Great annexes Judea.
- 190. *First Esdras* written.
- 175. Antiochus Epiphanes ascends the throne.
- 174. Antiochus Epiphanes makes Jason High Priest.
- 170. *Additions to Esther* written.
- 168. Antiochus Epiphanes sets up altar to Zeus in the Jerusalem Temple. Maccabean revolt against Greek rule.
- 166. Judas Maccabeaus victorious. Israel independent.
- 160. Death of Judas Maccabeaus, succeeded by Jonathan.
- 150. *Judith* and *Baruch* written. [Septuagint version](#) of Hebrew canon now complete.
- 143. Jonathan Maccabeaus slain, succeeded by Simon. *Book of Jubilees* written.
- 120. *Testaments of the Twelve Patriarchs* and *Assumption of Moses* written.
- 100. *Wisdom of Solomon* and *First Maccabees* written.
- 75. Additions to Daniel (*Song of the Three Children*, *Story of Susanna*, and *Bel and the Dragon*) written.
- 70. *Second Maccabees* and *Prayer of Manasseh* written. *Book of Enoch* compiled.
- 63. *Third Maccabees* written. Judea conquered by Roman army of Pompey.
- 37. Herod the Great appointed by Roman Senate as king of Judea. *Psalms of Solomon* written.
- 31. Augustus made Roman emperor.
- 19. Herod's restoration of Temple begun. *Fourth Maccabees* written.
- 5. Birth of Jesus Christ in Bethlehem.
- 4. Death of Herod the Great.

#### A.D.

- 6. Judea annexed to the Roman province of Syria. *Books of Adam and Eve* written.
- 14. Death of Augustus. Tiberius made emperor.
- 26. Baptism of Jesus. Pontius Pilate begins to govern Judea. *Book of the Secrets of Enoch* written.
- 27. Jesus calls the twelve, preaches Sermon on the Mount.
- 28. Peter, James, John witness the Transfiguration.
- 29. Jesus is crucified, rises again, ascends to heaven. Holy Spirit descends at Pentecost.
- 35. Martyrdom of Stephen. Paul persecutes the churches.
- 36. Jesus Christ appears to Paul near Damascus, converts and commissions him. Paul departs to Arabia.
- 38. Paul preaches in Syria and Cilicia.
- 43. Paul invited to Antioch, preaches to church. Roman legions invade Britain under the Emperor Claudius, beginning 400 years of Roman control.
- 46. Paul and Barnabas leave Antioch for First Missionary Journey. They preach in Cyprus and southern Galatia, with great success. Return to Antioch in 48.
- 49. Judaizers come to Antioch from Jerusalem, attempt to frustrate Paul's mission. Apostles at Jerusalem affirm Paul's teaching, give Gentiles freedom from the Law of Moses.
- 50. Paul and Silas leave Antioch for Second Missionary Journey. They preach in Galatia, Mysia, Macedonia, Achaia, Asia. Return to Antioch in 52.
- 52. Paul writes *First Thessalonians* and *Second Thessalonians*.
- 53. Paul begins Third Missionary Journey alone. Preaches in Asia, Macedonia, Achaia.
- 55. Judaizers active in Paul's churches. Paul writes *Galatians* to counter their influence.
- 56. Paul hears of disorder and conflict in Corinth, writes *First Corinthians* and *Second Corinthians*. *Epistle of James* circulates in Jewish churches.
- 57. Paul writes *Epistle to the Romans*, goes to Passover in Jerusalem, is assaulted by mob in the Temple, arrested by Romans, held in custody at Caesarea.
- 59. Paul appeals to Caesar, is sent to Rome for trial.



60. Paul held in Rome, writes *Philippians* and *Philemon*.
62. Paul writes *Ephesians* and *Colossians*, is released, visits Crete and Asia, leaves Titus in Crete. *Hebrews* written.
63. *Gospels of Matthew, Mark, Luke* probably in circulation by this time.
64. Paul writes *1 Timothy* and *Titus*.
65. Roman [persecution](#) of Christians begins under Nero. *1 Peter* and *Acts* written.
66. Jews of Judea rebel against Roman rule. Paul arrested again, sent to Rome. *Ascension of Isaiah* compiled. Docetic heresy (in which humanity of Christ is denied) arises in churches of Asia. Paul writes *2 Timothy*.
67. Paul put to death. Nero sends army under Vespasian to subdue Judea.
68. Nero commits suicide. *Jude* and *2 Peter* in circulation. Peter dead by now. Jerusalem Christians refuse to join rebellion, move to Pella in Arabia to escape persecution.
69. Vespasian becomes Emperor, puts army under command of his son Titus.
70. Jerusalem destroyed by Roman army under Titus. Remnant of Jewish church there falls into Ebionite heresy (in which Jesus is merely a prophet), rejects all writings but corrupted *Gospel of Matthew*. Rabbinic academy established at Jamnia.
73. Mass suicide of 1,000 Jewish Zealots at fortress of Masada.
81. Domitian becomes Emperor. Timothy dead by now. John has charge of churches in Asia. Docetic conventicles increase there.
85. John resists Ebionite and Docetic errors in the churches, writes his *Gospel of John* about now.
90. Domitian renews persecution of Christians. John exiled to Patmos. *1 John* written by now. *Second Esdras* and *Odes of Solomon* written. Council of Jewish rabbis at Jamnia ratifies Hebrew canon.
95. John writes his *Revelation*, is released, returns to Ephesus. Docetic heretics depart from John's churches and form their own sects.
98. Trajan becomes Emperor.
100. *2 John* and *3 John* written by now. Death of John in Ephesus. *Epistle of Clement to the Corinthians* written by Clement of Rome. Death of Clement. *Teaching of the Twelve Apostles* (earliest catechism) written. Josephus writes *Contra Apionem* in defence of Judaism.
110. Persecution of churches in Syrian Antioch. *Second* and *Third Baruch* written.
112. Persecution of churches in Bythynia. [Pliny the Younger reports to Trajan](#).
115. Bishops established over elders in larger churches of Asia. Legalism prevails in many churches.
117. Death of Ignatius of Antioch in Rome. *Epistle of Barnabas* written by now. Hadrian becomes Emperor.
125. Earliest notice of church in Alexandria.
130. Death of Papias, disciple of John.
132. Jews hail militant Bar-Cochba as Messiah and revolt again.
135. Roman army victorious. Jews dispersed. Gnosticism flourishes in Asia. Jamnia academy moves to Galilee. *Fourth Baruch* written.
138. Valentinus (Gnostic arch-heretic) comes to Rome.
140. *Shepherd of Hermas* and *Second Epistle of Clement* written. Marcion opposes legalistic trend in churches, collects and edits Paul's epistles, comes to Rome.
144. Marcion withdraws from church in Rome and establishes heretical sect, rejects all writings but corrupted letters of Paul and Gospel of Luke, gains many followers.
156. Death of Polycarp of Smyrna (according to the chronology of many modern scholars), last disciple of John. Sacramentalism arises in the churches. Montanus begins charismatic revival preaching in northwest Asia, gains a following in small towns.
160. Birth of Tertullian, first of the Latin Church Fathers.
161. Marcus Aurelius becomes Emperor, begins severe persecution of the Church.
166. Death of Justin Martyr, first Christian apologist. Death of Polycarp of Smyrna (according to the chronology of Eusebius and some modern scholars). Tatian leaves Rome for Syria. Death of Marcion. Alexandrian church flourishes.
170. [Muratorian Canon](#) lists approved books of the Church: *James, Jude, 2 Peter, 2 John, 3 John, Hebrews* still not accepted by all. Bishops now preside over elders in most churches.
173. Tatian teaches Encratite heresy (Gnostic asceticism) in Syria, composes *Diatessaron*, harmony of Gospels of Matthew, Mark, Luke.
177. Persecution of churches in Gaul.
178. Death of Montanus. Bishops of Asia excommunicate his charismatic followers. Irenaeus bishop of Lyons.
180. Beginning of Syrian and Latin versions of the New Testament. First report of Christians among Germanic tribes.
185. Birth of Origen.
200. Death of Irenaeus of Smyrna, disciple of Polycarp. Montanist conventicles now in Gaul. *Mishna* (legal tradition of the Pharisees) committed to writing by rabbis.
203. Origen head of catechetical school in Alexandria.
204. Birth of Plotinus.
207. Tertullian, "distressed by the envy and laxity of the clergy of the Roman church," joins the Montanist sect in Carthage.
215. Death of Clement of Alexandria, teacher of Origen.
220. Death of Tertullian.
231. Origen moves to Caesarea.
254. Death of Origen.
263. Birth of Eusebius.
270. Death of Plotinus.
276. Execution of Manes, founder of Manichaeism.
288. Birth of Constantine.
303. Emperor Diocletian begins severe [persecution](#) of the Church. Many copies of Scripture burned.
312. Constantine converted, becomes Emperor in the West. End of persecutions.
313. Edict of Toleration promulgated by Constantine at Milan. Eusebius appointed bishop of Caesarea.
318. Arius teaches that Christ was created being, is excommunicated by Alexander, bishop of Alexandria.
320. Pachomius establishes first Christian monastery.
324. Constantine gains control over Eastern provinces, becomes sole Emperor.



- 325. Constantine convenes Council of Nicea, rejects Arian heresy, affirms Trinitarian Dogma.
- 330. Constantinople dedicated as new capitol of the Empire.
- 336. Death of Arius.
- 340. Goths converted as a tribe by Ulfilus (Arian).
- 345. Birth of Jerome in Dalmatia.
- 350. Birth of Chrysostom.
- 354. Birth of Augustine.
- 363. [Council of Laodicea](#) publishes authoritative list of books considered as Scripture in the East.
- 367. [Easter Letter of Athanasius](#) delimits books of Scripture.
- 382. Jerome comes to Rome.
- 387. [Augustine converted](#) from Manichaeism and baptized.
- 394. Olympian games abolished.
- 395. Augustine made bishop of Hippo.
- 397. [Third Council of Carthage](#) publishes authoritative list of books considered as Scripture in the West.
- 405. Jerome finishes [Latin Vulgate](#) version of the Bible.
- 410. Rome sacked by Goths under Alaric.
- 426. Augustine publishes his *City of God*.

Continue to [Chronology of the English Bible](#)

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[Bible Research](#) > [Canon](#) > **Chronology**



## Disputed Books of the New Testament

The table below shows which of the disputed New Testament books and other writings are included in catalogs of canonical books up to the eighth century. **Y** indicates that the book is plainly listed as *Holy Scripture*; **N** indicates that the author lists it in a class of *disputed* books; **M** indicates that the list *may* be construed to include the book as Holy Scripture; **X** indicates that the book is *expressly rejected* by the author. An **S** indicates that the author does not mention the book at all, which implies its rejection. See notes on the authorities and books following.

### KEY TO BOOKS

Heb. - Epistle to the Hebrews  
 Jas. - Epistle of James  
 Jn. - Second and Third Epistle of John  
 Pet. - Second Epistle of Peter  
 Jude - Epistle of Jude  
 Rev. - Revelation of John  
 Shep. - [Shepherd of Hermas](#)  
 Apoc. - [Apocalypse of Peter](#)  
 Barn. - [Epistle of Barnabas](#)  
 Clem. - [Epistle of Clement](#)

1. Greek & Latin	Date	Heb.	Jas.	Jn.	Pet.	Jude	Rev.	Shep.	Apoc.	Barn.	Clem.
<a href="#">Muratorian Fragment</a>	170	S	S	M	S	Y	Y	X	N	S	S
<a href="#">Origen</a>	225	Y	N	N	N	N	Y	S	S	S	S
<a href="#">Eusebius of Caesarea</a>	324	Y	N	N	N	N	N	X	X	X	S
<a href="#">Cyril of Jerusalem</a>	348	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	S	S	S	S	S
<a href="#">Cheltenham list</a>	360	S	S	Y	Y	S	Y	S	S	S	S
<a href="#">Council of Laodicea</a>	363	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	S	S	S	S	S
<a href="#">Athanasius</a>	367	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	X	S	S	S
<a href="#">Gregory of Nazianzus</a>	380	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	S	S	S	S	S
<a href="#">Amphilocius of Iconium</a>	380	Y	N	N	N	N	N	S	S	S	S
<a href="#">Rufinus</a>	380	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	X	S	S	S
<a href="#">Epiphanius</a>	385	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	S	S	S	S
<a href="#">Jerome</a>	390	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	S	S	S	S
<a href="#">Augustine</a>	397	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	S	S	S	S
<a href="#">3rd Council of Carthage</a>	397	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	S	S	S	S
<a href="#">Codex Claromontanus</a>	400	M	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	S
<a href="#">Letter of Innocent I</a>	405	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	S	X	S	S
<a href="#">Decree of Gelasius</a>	550	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	X	S	S	S
<a href="#">Isadore of Seville</a>	625	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	S	S	S	S
<a href="#">John of Damascus</a>	730	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	S	S	S	S
2. Syrian	Date	Heb.	Jas.	Jn.	Pet.	Jude	Rev.	Shep.	Apoc.	Barn.	Clem.
<a href="#">Apostolic Canons</a>	380	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	S	S	S	S	Y
<a href="#">Peshitta Version</a>	400	Y	Y	S	S	S	S	S	S	S	S
<a href="#">Report of Junilius</a>	550	Y	N	N	N	N	N	S	S	S	S

### NOTES

The most satisfactory treatment in English of the Church's New Testament canon is Bruce Metzger's *The Canon of the New Testament: its Origin, Development, and Significance* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1987). Still useful is the earlier study by B.F. Westcott, *A General Survey of the History of the Canon of the New Testament* (London: MacMillan, 1855; 6th edition 1889; reprinted, Grand Rapids, 1980). For a popular conservative survey see Norman Geisler and William Nix, *General Introduction to the Bible* (Chicago: Moody Press, 1986).

**Muratorian Fragment.** The oldest known list of New Testament books, discovered by Muratori in a seventh century manuscript. The list itself is dated to about 170 because its author refers to the episcopate of Pius I of Rome (died 157) as recent. He mentions only two epistles of John, without describing them. The Apocalypse of Peter is mentioned as a book which "some of us will not allow to be read in church." [See English text.](#)

**Origen.** An influential teacher in Alexandria, the chief city of Egypt. His canon is known from the compilation made by Eusebius for his *Church History* (see below). He accepted Hebrews as Scripture while entertaining doubts about its author. [See English text.](#)

**Eusebius of Caesarea.** An early historian of the Church. His list was included in his *Church History*. He ascribed Hebrews to Paul. [See English text.](#)

**Cyril of Jerusalem.** Bishop of Jerusalem. The omission of Revelation from his list is due to a general reaction against this book in the east after excessive use was made of it by the Montanist cults. [See English text.](#)

**Cheltenham list.** A catalog dating from the middle of the fourth century contained in two medieval Latin manuscripts, probably from Africa. [See Latin](#)



[text with translation.](#)

**Council of Laodicea.** The authenticity of this list of canonical books has been doubted by many scholars because it is absent from various manuscripts containing the decrees of the regional (Galatian) Council. The list may have been added later. On the omission of Revelation see *Cyril of Jerusalem* above. [See English text.](#)

**Athanasius.** Bishop of Alexandria. His list was published as part of his *Easter Letter* in 367. After the list he declares, "these are the wells of salvation, so that he who thirsts may be satisfied with the sayings in these. Let no one add to these. Let nothing be taken away." [See English text.](#)

**Gregory of Nazianzus.** Bishop of Constantinople from 378 to 382. On the omission of Revelation see *Cyril of Jerusalem* above. [See English text.](#)

**Amphilocius of Iconium.** Bishop of Iconium in Galatia. [See English text.](#)

**Rufinus.** An elder in the church in Aquileia (northeast Italy), and a friend of Jerome. The Latin text is given in Westcott, appendix D. [See English text.](#)

**Epiphanius.** Bishop of Salamis (isle of Cyprus) from 367 to 402. The Greek text is given in Westcott, appendix D. [See English text.](#)

**Jerome.** Born near Aquileia, lived in Rome for a time, and spent most of his later life as a monk in Syria and Palestine. He was the most learned churchman of his time, and was commissioned by the bishop of Rome to produce an authoritative Latin version (the *Vulgate*). The Latin text is given in Westcott, appendix D. [See English text.](#)

**Augustine.** Bishop of Hippo (in the Roman colony on the northern coast of western Africa). The Latin text is given in Westcott, appendix D. [See English text.](#)

**Third Council of Carthage.** Not a general council but a regional council of African bishops, much under the influence of Augustine. [See English text.](#)

**Codex Claromontanus.** A stichometric catalog from the third century is inserted between Philemon and Hebrews in this sixth century Greek-Latin manuscript of the epistles of Paul. The list does not have Hebrews, but neither does it have Philippians and 1 and 2 Thessalonians, and so many scholars have supposed that these four books dropped out by an error of transcription, the scribe's eye jumping from the end of the word *ephesious* (Ephesians) to the end of *ebraious* (Hebrews). Besides the books indicated on the table the list includes the apocryphal *Acts of Paul*. [See English text.](#)

**Letter of Innocent I.** A letter from the bishop of Rome to the bishop of Toulouse. The Latin text is given in Westcott, appendix D. [See English text.](#)

**Decree of Gelasius.** Traditionally ascribed to Gelasius, bishop of Rome from 492 to 496, and thought to be promulgated by him as president of a council of 70 bishops in Rome, but now regarded by most scholars as spurious, and probably composed by an Italian churchman in the sixth century. The Latin text is given in Westcott, appendix D. [See English text.](#)

**Isadore of Seville.** Archbishop of Seville (Spain), and founder of a school in that city. His list appears in an encyclopedia he compiled for his students. The Latin text is given in Westcott, appendix D.

**John of Damascus.** An eminent theologian of the Eastern Church, born in Damascus, but a monk in Jerusalem for most of his life. His list is derived from the writings of Epiphanius. The Greek text is given in Westcott, appendix D. [See English text.](#)

**Apostolic Canons.** One of many additions made by the final editor of an ancient Syrian book of church order called *The Apostolic Constitutions*. The whole document purports to be from the apostles, but this imposture is not taken seriously by any scholar today. Nevertheless, the work is useful as evidence for the opinions of a part of the Syrian churches towards the end of the fourth century. The list of canonical books was probably added about the year 380. On the omission of Revelation see *Cyril of Jerusalem* above. [See English text.](#)

**Peshitta Version.** The old Syriac version did not include the four disputed books indicated on the table. These were not generally received as Scripture in the Syrian churches until the ninth century.

**Report of Junilius.** An African bishop of the sixth century. After visiting the Syrian churches he wrote a work describing their practices, in which his list is given. See Latin text in Westcott, appendix D.

### Sub-Apostolic Literature

*For a brief survey of works of this class and their place in the early Church, see Metzger, ch. 7*

**The Shepherd of Hermas.** A autobiographical tale about a certain Hermas who is visited by an angelic Pastor (Shepherd), who imparts some legalistic teaching to him in the form of an allegory. Written probably in Rome around A.D. 100.

**The Apocalypse of Peter.** This work expands upon the Olivet discourse (Mat. 24-25) with descriptions of the last judgment and vivid scenes of heaven and hell. Written about A.D. 130.

**The Epistle of Barnabas.** A legalistic but anti-Jewish discourse on Christian life falsely ascribed to Barnabas, the missionary companion of Paul. Written probably about A.D. 120 in Italy.

**The Epistle of Clement.** A letter written about A.D. 100 to the church in Corinth from the church in Rome, and traditionally ascribed to Clement of Rome. The author has heard that the disorderly Corinthians have now ousted their elders, and in this letter he urges them to repent of the action.







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For a summary of some of my personal views on the Bible, [click here \(of course!\)](#).

[Ten Commandments]

### Index to this Document

[The Book of Books](#)  
[Getting Acquainted with the Bible](#)  
[The Authority of Scripture](#)  
[God's Word Written](#)  
[Eerdmans' Handbook to the Bible](#)  
[History of the World in Christian Perspective](#)

## The Book of Books

by William Evans

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### THE CANON OF THE BIBLE

In classical Greek the word "canon" signifies properly, "a straight rod," or "a carpenter's rule." In the early ages of the Christian religion it was used with considerable indefiniteness of meaning, though generally denoting a standard of opinion and practice. Later it came to be used as a testing rule in art, logic, grammar, and ethics. Still later the sacred writings received the name of the "Canon of the Scriptures." When, therefore, we use the term we may mean one of two things, or, indeed, both:

1. The Canon of Truth--referring to the restriction of the number of books that compose the sacred volume. As such it was first used in the year A.D. 367.
2. The Rule of Faith and Life--referring to the application of the sacred Scriptures as a rule of our lives. In this sense it is used in Galatians 6:16; Philippians 3:16.

The sense in which we use the word in this chapter is that those books are *canonical* which Christians have regarded as authentic, genuine, and of divine authority and inspiration. These books are to be found in the Bible; in the Authorized Version of 1611, the Revised Version of 1881 and 1885, and in the American Revised Version of 1901.

By *uncanonical* books we mean those that are not included in the canon, such as the Apocrypha, the Shepherd of Hermas, the Epistle of Barnabas.

#### 1. Why was a Canon of the Bible necessary?

So long as the living voice of prophets and apostles was to be heard, there was no pressing need of a canon of Scripture. Under the inspiration of God they knew what was inspired, and what was not. But as soon as these men were dead--and with them inspiration ceased--it became necessary that their writings be gathered together to know what were their messages to the churches, and to preserve those writings from corruption.

Another reason why a canon was necessary was to preclude the possibility of additions to the number of inspired works. Already numerous writings were extant purporting to be inspired. Hence the question arose, Which of these are really inspired? What is the extent of inspired literature?

Still another and potent reason for the formation of the canon lay in the fact that the Emperor Diocletian issued in A.D. 302 an edict that all the sacred books should be destroyed by fire. hence the question arose as to which books rightly deserved the name of inspired and sacred.

#### 2. How was the Canon of the Bible formed?

##### a. The formation of the Old Testament Canon.

The formation of the Old Testament canon was gradual, and was composed of the writings which spread over many centuries.

Moses commanded that the books of the law be placed in the ark. This--with the addition of the book of Joshua--was done, and the sacred books were kept there



during the wilderness journey, and also were in the ark during its permanent residence in Jerusalem. (Deuteronomy 31:9,26, cf. 2 Kings 22:8; Joshua 24:26; 1 Samuel 10:25.)

Then were gathered and placed in the temple the historical and prophetic books from Joshua to David's time. On the construction of the temple Solomon deposited in it the earlier books (2 Kings 22:8, Isaiah 34:16), and enriched the collection with inspired writings from his own pen, and also some prophetic writings. So we find Daniel (9:2, R.V.) referring to "the books," Isaiah to "the book of the Lord" (29:18, 34:16).

After Solomon's day a succession of prophets arose, Jonah, Amos, Isaiah, Hosea, Joel, Micah, Nahum, Zephaniah, Jeremiah, Obadiah, and Habakkuk. These all flourished before the destruction of the temple, and enlarged the collection of existing sacred books by valuable additions.

After the Babylonian capture, when the temple was rebuilt and worship re-established, then doubtless were added the writings of Haggai and Zechariah.

About fifty years after the temple was rebuilt Ezra made a collection of the sacred writings (Neh. 8:2,3,14). To this collection were added the writings of Nehemiah, Malachi, and Ezra. It is a fact of history that Nehemiah gathered the "Acts of the Kings and the Prophets, and those of David," when founding a library for the second temple, 432 B.C. (See 2 Maccabees 2:13).

The canon of the Old Testament in the form we now have it, was the work of Ezra and the Great Synagogue. This fact is borne witness to in the most ancient Jewish writings. The Great Synagogue was composed of Ezra, Nehemiah, Haggai, Zechariah, and Malachi. There is no doubt but that such a collection of books existed in the time of our Lord and the apostles (Luke 24:27,44).

#### **b. The New Testament Canon**

The New Testament canon was gradually added to that of the Old Testament. But it was some considerable time after our Lord's ascension before any of the books contained in it were actually written.

The first and most important work of the apostles was to deliver a *personal testimony* to the chief facts of the Gospel history (Mark 16:15; Acts 1:21,22). Their teaching was at first oral, and it was no part of their intention to create a permanent literature. A cycle of selected representative facts sufficed to form the groundwork of their oral Gospel (1 Cor. 15:1-10).

But in the course of time many endeavored to commit to writing this oral Gospel (Luke 1:1-4). So long as the apostles were still living, the necessity for *written* records of the words and actions of our Lord was not so pressing. But when the time came for their removal from this world, it became extremely important the authoritative records should be put forth. Thus the *Gospels* came into existence, two by apostles themselves, and two by friends and close companions of the apostles.

But already had arisen another kind of composition. Founders of churches, often unable to visit them personally, desired to communicate with their converts for purposes of counsel, reproof, and instruction. Thus arose the *Epistles*, which were put forth from time to time to meet special needs and emergencies.

The persecution of Diocletian (302 A.D.) brought to the front the question of the sacred literature of the church. The persecutors demanded that the Scriptures should be given up. This the Christians refused to do. Hence the question became urgent--What books are apostolic? The answer lies in our New Testament. There were at that time many false and spurious gospels and epistles. Careful, prayerful, and deliberate examination, however, proved which were genuine and which were false. The genuine were received by the church as the inspired writings of the apostles and others whose names the books bear. Thus arose the New Testament canon.

### **3. The books called "Homologoumena" and "Antilegomena."**

In the study of canonics a word or two must be said regarding these terms, and what is meant by them.

At the time of the formation of the New Testament canon twenty out of the twenty-seven books were readily and universally accepted as genuine, and therefore called "Homologoumena" (*i.e.* acknowledged). These twenty books were the four Gospels, the Acts, the epistles of Paul (except that to the Hebrews), and the first epistles of John and Peter. The other seven books--Hebrews, 2 and 3 John, 2 Peter, Jude, James, Revelation--were disputed for a time by particular churches, and were therefore styled "Antilegomena" (or disputed).

The question at issue with regard to the books called "Antilegomena," was not so much that of the canonicity of the writings, as whether they were really written by the men who were called their authors. Hebrews bore no name of its author, and differed in style from the acknowledged Pauline epistles; 2 Peter differed in style from 1 Peter; James and Jude styled themselves "servants," and not "apostles"; the write of 2 and 3 John called himself an "elder" or "presbyter," and not an "apostle"; Jude recorded apocryphal stories. For these reasons these books were not at once allowed their place in the canon. After a deliberate examination, however, they were at last received as genuine, the very delay proving the close scrutiny which their claims had undergone. At the beginning of the fourth century they were received by most of the churches, and at the end of that century they were received by all.

### **4. The Apocryphal Books.**

These books derive their name from a Greek word, *apokruphos*, which means "*hidden*." They are so called because they are,--(1) hidden; (2) of unknown authority; (3) spurious. They were not recognized as inspired books by the Jews, who regarded them, however as having high authority, and held them in high esteem as being a valuable history of their nation. Although they were carefully distinguished from the canonical Scriptures, their use was not only allowed, but many of them are quoted in Talmudical writings. They were given a place by themselves in the sacred volume, but with the distinct statement that they were not to be regarded as of equal authority with the books of the canon, their position being between the Old and New Testaments. We find them in some Bibles to-day--especially in Roman Catholic Bibles, since they are regarded by the roman church as inspired books.

The Apocrypha contains fourteen books, namely, 1 and 2 Esdras, Tobit, Judith, the rest of Esther, Wisdom, Ecclesiasticus, Baruch, the Song of the Three Children, the Story of Susannah, Bel and the Dragon, the Prayer of Manasses, and 1 and 2 Maccabees. it is true that by some of the fathers of the Christian church a few of these books have been quoted as canonical, but they were not looked on in this light; nor were their titles included in any list of canonical writings during the first four centuries after the birth of our Lord. It was not, indeed, until the Council of Trent, in 1545, that they were definitely declared to be an integral portion of Holy Scripture as acknowledged by the Romish church. "Philo," says Angus, "never quotes them as he does the sacred Scriptures; and Josephus expressly excludes them. The Jewish church never received them as part of the canon, and they are never quoted either by our Lord or by His apostles; a fact the more striking as St. Paul twice quotes heathen poets. It is remarkable, too, that the last inspired prophet closes his predictions by recommending to his countrymen the books of Moses, and intimates that no other messenger is to be expected by them till the coming of the second Elijah (Mal. 4:4-6) \* \* \* Internal evidence, moreover, is against their inspiration. Divine authority is claimed by none of the writers, and by some it is virtually disowned (2 Mac. 2:23; 15:38). The books contain statements at variance with history (Baruch 1:2, compared with Jer. 43:6,7), self-contradictory, and opposed to the doctrines and precepts of Scripture."

For what, then, can the Apocryphal books be esteemed useful? In the Church of England some parts of them are read "for example of life and instruction of manners, but yet doth it not apply them to establish any doctrine." By no Protestant church are these writings held to be the rule of faith, and contrasted with the canonical books, they are utterly without authority. From a historical point of view they are of value in showing the condition of the Jewish people, and relating certain events that intervene between the closing of the Old Testament and the opening of the Christian era.

These facts sufficiently indicate the course of the argument by which the canonicity of the sacred Scriptures is proved. Let it be proven that these books were written by the men whose names they bear, and that these men wrote under the inspiration of the divine Spirit, and the canonicity of the Bible is a settled fact. We have, therefore, a right to believe that we have in our Bible a rule of faith and life--yea, the supreme and ultimate rule--by which we may govern our lives in order



that they may be in accordance with the revealed will of God.

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## Getting Acquainted with the Bible

by Martin Hegland

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### ITS ORIGIN

An abundance of evidence indicates that the various books of the Old Testament were written at different times throughout a period of about a thousand years prior to 400 B.C. in the case of the New Testament the books were written from about 50 A.D. to 100 A.D.

The writers of the books of the Bible were, of course, human beings. But it has always been the historic Christian belief that they wrote under an influence of the Holy Spirit which has been called "Inspiration."

This fact of inspiration makes the Bible qualitatively different from all other books in the world. It is different not merely in degree but in kind. It stands in a class by itself, unique and unparalleled. It is in very truth the Word of God.

### HOW THE BOOKS OF THE BIBLE WERE SELECTED

There were many other books in Bible lands than those we find in our present Bible. This was true both in the Old and the New Testament times. How did it come about that just the books that we have were included in the Bible and not others?

The answer in brief is that the selection was made by the spiritual consciousness of godly people. In order to appreciate what this statement means, let us note the activity of the Holy Spirit in the affairs of men. Both Scripture and experience make it abundantly clear that in the lives that are surrendered to God there is definite light and guidance that come from the Holy Spirit. Men become wondrously wise spiritually when they permit Him to instruct them. Jesus spoke of this to His disciples when He assured them of the Spirit's help whenever they came into a difficult situation: "The Holy Spirit shall teach you in that very hour what ye ought to say" (Luke 12:12). And on another occasion he told them that the Holy Spirit "shall guide you into all truth" (John 16:13).

Many of us have been repeatedly amazed at the spiritual understanding and insight of people who may have had but a meager general education, but who have been in attendance in the school of the Holy Spirit.

This divinely guided consciousness of godly people in Bible times enabled them to judge what was spiritually true and what was false in the books that circulated among them and to detect the evidences of inspiration. There were, to be sure, certain specific standards set up as time went on, such as authorship, time of writing, language used, and the like. But the main fact to bear in mind is that as a result of the operation of the spiritual judgments of godly people there emerged out of the mass of writings certain books which by common agreement were regarded as divinely inspired. These books we call the Canon or the Canonical Books. "Canon" is a Greek word which means a rule or measuring line. A Canonical book, therefore, is one that conforms to the "Canon," that is, passes the test.

There is much evidence to indicate that the Canon of the Old Testament was fixed by the about the year 400 B.C. largely as a result of the work of Ezra and Nehemiah and a council of Jews known as the Great Synagogue, which met after the return from the Babylonian captivity. Long before that time, however, many of the books we now have in the Old Testament had been agreed upon as inspired.

In the case of the New Testament the fixing of the Canon was done mainly at the council at Carthage in 387 A.D., although the evidence points to the selection of the books as early as about the year 100 A.D.

Certain books known as Apocryphal Books were by some regarded as on a par with the Canonical books, but they were not admitted to the Canon by those who were in the best position to pass on their merits.

### HOW THE BOOKS WERE TRANSMITTED

There are no original manuscripts of any of the Bible books known to be in existence today. Perhaps God's wisdom is evident in this, for if any of them did exist, some people might be tempted to worship them as idols.

Humanly speaking, the absence of any originals or even of the earliest copies is explainable on the ground of the perishableness of the materials and the Jewish custom not to tolerate any soiled or worn-out copies of their Scriptures. These were either burned or buried.

Since there were no printing presses in Bible times, the various books had to be reproduced by hand. They were written on baked clay tablets, on parchment (sheepskin), on paper made of the papyrus reed, and later on vellum (calfskin). The copying was done with extreme and conscientious care.

In spite of the extreme care exercised in copying the Bible books, minor errors inevitably crept in through the course of the centuries. Hence there arose what are known as *variations* in the manuscripts. A great many of these have been listed, but scholars are of the opinion that not a single variation vitally affects any basic Christian truth.

In order to determine as nearly as possible what the original text was, a vast amount of scholarship has been expended in the study of old manuscripts, early translations, quotations from and references to the Bible in other ancient writings.

As a result of able, extensive, and painstaking textual scholarship it may be confidently affirmed that we possess today the Bible books essentially as they came from the inspired writers.



[Charles Finney quote]

## The Authority of Scripture

by Leland M. Haines

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### Christ and the Written Word

Today we know of no writings of Jesus. The only evidence there is that He ever wrote anything is found in the story in John 8:1-11, where he wrote a few words on the ground with His finger. Since this is true, how can His Word be identified with the Scriptures, and particularly with the twenty-seven-book-New-Testament canon? At first sight it might appear that to attempt to construct a relation between the historical events and the New Testament canon is an *a posteriori* matter. The first person to list the twenty-seven books now canonized into the New Testament was Athanasius (c. 293-373), a bishop of Alexandria. And it was not until the fifth century that disputes about what books compose the canon generally ceased. Thus it would appear that the New Testament canonization took place *after* the historical redemptive events and therefore should be judged as a matter of church history, not a part of the events. This is true. The formation of the canon as a closed collection of twenty-seven books belongs to church history. Yet there is another point to be considered; that is, what makes the twenty-seven New Testament books the Word of God revealed to man and thus the authority in religious areas? The answer to this lies in the historical events and in the attitude of the early church toward the twenty-seven books. Let us explore this further.

### Christ and the Apostles

Jesus Christ established the means by which His Word would be communicated to distant areas and in future times. He called the apostles to follow Him and "come away" from their other interests and learn from Him. These apostles were commissioned to preach and were given "power against unclean spirits..., to heal all manner of sickness and all manner of disease," or to share in some of the things Christ Himself did (Matt. 10, Mark 3:13-19, Luke 6:12-16). Christ promised them help in doing this after he would leave the earth. He promised a "Comforter, even the Holy Spirit, whom the Father will send in my name; he shall teach you all things, and bring to your remembrance all that I said unto you" (John 14:26, ASV). This promise is most significant. It promised the apostles guidance in their teaching and writing, to enable them to recall and teach all things He had taught them. This promise was again made before His ascension (Acts 1:8).

The apostles knew of this "power of attorney" to represent Christ and of the Holy Spirit's guidance in carrying out the task. The Apostle Paul wrote to the Thessalonians, "When ye received the word of God which ye heard of us, ye accepted it not as the word of men, but as it is in truth, the word of God" (1 Thess. 2:13). To the Corinthians he wrote that, "We have received, not the spirit of the world, but the Spirit which is of God... And we impart this in words not taught by human wisdom but taught by the Spirit" (1 Cor. 2:12-13, RSV). Since he received it from Christ, he could tell his readers to "take knowledge of the things which I write unto you, that they are the commandments of the Lord" (1 Cor. 14:37, also 7:10, ASV), or that "if any man obey not our word by this epistle, note that man, and have no company with him; that he may be ashamed: (2 Thess. 3:14). Paul also gave many other indications that he received his message from Christ (Gal. 1:12, Eph. 3:3, 1 Cor. 15:8, Acts 9:3-6), and that "it is now revealed unto his holy apostles and prophets by the Spirit" (Eph. 3:5). The writer of Hebrews also knew of the same Holy Spirit guidance of the apostles; "How shall we escape, if we neglect so great a salvation" which, having at the first been spoken through the Lord, was confirmed unto us by them that heard; God also bearing witness with them, both by signs and wonders, and by manifold powers, and by gifts of the Holy Spirit, according to his own will" (Heb. 2:3-4, ASV). John also knew of the same Holy Spirit guidance; he said, "The revelation of Jesus Christ, which God gave him to show unto his servants, even the things which must shortly come to pass: and he sent and signified it by his angel unto his servant John; who bare witness of the word of God, and of the testimony of Jesus Christ" (Rev. 1:1-2, ASV; 1:10-11, 19; 2:1ff; 4:2; 14:13; 19:9; 21:5). These Scriptures show that they apostles knew of the guidance that enabled them to write with Christ's authority. This was the method Christ established to communicate His Word to distant areas and to future times.

### The Apostles and Oral Tradition

There are basically two different forms of communication, oral and written. The apostles used both in exercising their "power of attorney" to present Christ's Word. The oral form is by far the earliest form used and dates back to the their first commission to "preach" (Matt. 10, Mark 3:13-19, Luke 6:12-16). Apostolic preaching was for many years the only form used and held a place of high importance throughout the Apostolic era. Since this such an important form of communication, authorized by Christ for use by the apostles, we should understand it and be acquainted with the New Testament concept of it.

In the New Testament there are many references to this oral form. Luke wrote that his writings "were delivered . . . unto us (Luke and his contemporaries) which from the beginning were eyewitnesses and ministers of the word" (Luke 1:1-4). Jude also wrote that when he was eager "to write unto you of the common salvation, it was needful for me to write unto you, and exhort you that ye should earnestly contend for the faith which was once delivered unto the saints" (Jude 3). Paul wrote, "stand fast, and hold the traditions which ye have been taught, whether by word, or our epistle" (2 Thess. 2:15).

### The Apostles and the Written Word

As time passed, the apostles increasingly put their communications into a written form. This can be concluded from the Scriptures cited in the last section, in which there is evidence of an increase in the use writing as the church spread. This was an expected and natural development. As the apostles opened work in more distant areas, they could keep in contact with churches by writing. Also it was inevitable that the apostles would die one by one. These two factors made the certainty of the apostles' oral traditions doubtful, thus placing greater importance on the written word. The written word quickly received a place of high significance. It was placed on the same level as the Old Testament Scriptures. Paul's letters were read in church gatherings on the same level as Old Testament Scriptures (1 Thess. 5:27, Col. 4:16). Peter classed Paul's letter with the Scriptures (2 Peter 3:15). John presupposed that his Book of the Revelation would be read as other Scriptures (Rev. 1:3).

It is clear from the above that the written word was given great significance, and as time passed it was given greater priority over the oral form of transmission. Actually the written word was a fixation of the oral form.



## The New Testament Canon

Thus far we have established a relationship between the apostles' written word and Christ's historical redemptive events. The question now arising is, "How did the apostles' writings come together to form the New Testament canon—the collection of books which are received as genuine and inspired Holy Scripture?" The answer to this question is simple. The Christians and the church simply acknowledged the apostles' authority and accepted their writings, and writings of those intimately associated with them (as Mark and Luke), as part of the Holy Scripture. The church did not put together a canon that made books authoritative because they were included in it. The church only acknowledged what was given by the apostles, and included books in the canon because of this apostolic authority. They never regarded these books as anything else than canonical.

The actual canonization process took a long time. At first each of the apostle/s writings were acknowledged individually as authoritative. There was no canon of them that gave them authority because they were in it. But as time passed the need for a canon increased. False teachers arose and questioned the authority of certain of the writings that did not agree with their ideas. This forced the Christian brotherhood to gather together the individual apostle/s writings and assemble them into a canon. The church gathered together the writings that were accepted as the apostles' from the very beginning. This was no real problem for the church since she as a whole generally acknowledged the same writings. The writings that were questioned were small in number and then generally questioned only in late times by obviously false teachers and in small local areas.

Today we accept the twenty-seven books of the New Testament as authoritative and can do so without the slightest doubt. We depend on the early Christians' decisions that each of the twenty-seven books has apostolic authorship. We do this since there were in a much better position to judge. The reason for this lies in the concept of apostolicity, which limits it to a certain place and time. Those at the correct place and time, the recipients of each writing, are in the best position to say where the writings came from. Thus we accept their decision and can do so with confidence since the Holy Spirit was at work guiding the decision.

In summary, the New Testament is our authority in religious matters because it is tied to the historical redemptive events. Christ established the means by which it was written. He called apostles to give His Word and gave the Holy Spirit as a guide. The early Christians accepted their word as Christ's Word because of this call. The early church gathered together the apostles' writings, and by acknowledging their authority from Christ, completed the last step in the recording of the final revelation of God to man, the New Testament.

## Present-Day Scriptures

It is clear that Christ and the Apostles treated Scripture as authoritative and as constituting truth. The question that now needs answering is, "Are the Scriptures we possess today worthy to be treated as Christ treated them?" We know that through the historical redemptive events Scripture was "breathed of God." This applies to the originals and not to copies of them. The original was made by men moved by the Holy Spirit. The copies were made by ordinary men. But does this fact mean a great loss to us? Are our present-day copies so poor that they are not trustworthy? When one realizes that God revealed His plan of redemption to men through historical events, and that we know about these events only through Scripture, one will also realize that these Scriptures must be trustworthy. Otherwise we would not know of His plan of redemption. It is beyond one's imagination that an infallible and loving God would let His plan of redemption be lost through untrustworthy copies of the Scriptures. Also, when one realizes that God prevented errors from entering the originals by guiding the writers by the Holy Spirit, one will realize that God would also have prevented significant errors from entering through copying.

One's confidence in our Scriptures is also supported by the attitude of Christ and the Apostles toward them. They did not hesitate to trust the Old Testament Scriptures. These too were not originals. If they had faith in the adequacy of their copies and never questioned them, we should have even more faith in our New Testament copies as being trustworthy.

Many of the copies we possess are bound to contain errors due to the numerous copyings and recopyings they have gone through. Although the copying process did introduce a few errors, it also increased the means for finding errors. By careful study and comparison of the many old manuscripts, it is possible to obtain a sound proximity of the originals. The errors that were introduced here and there in some of the copies are found by comparing the many manuscripts, making it possible to approximate the original. This approximation of the original can be considered as inerrant and infallible; that is, it can be held as a reliable authority (never deceiving or misleading) and is free from error (always giving the thought of the original). This does not necessarily mean that we have a slavish verbatim copy of the original down to every small word. There might be trifling variations in wording. But these are so minor that there is no doubt about the authors' thoughts not being known to us, and in most cases there is little doubt about now knowing the words they used to communicate the thoughts.

It is not within the realm of this paper to discuss the alleged discrepancies in Scripture. But some comments will be made. First, it should be said that many of the alleged discrepancies are the result of an eager search for them and from a conviction that they exist. They are not necessarily the result of an honest and scientific inquiry. Too often the desire to find discrepancies has resulted in passages being cited as discrepancies when they could be harmonized. Scientific methods do not treat a difficulty as an example of a discrepancy immediately, without seriously studying first to see if it can be reasonably and naturally explained. This does not mean that all apparent discrepancies can be harmonized. But this is not serious. In all probability, if more was known about the events surrounding such difficulties, we could readily understand them. Our difficulties are often the result of a lack of knowledge. Actually it is difficult to prove a discrepancy. Because if any reasonable explanation can be found, a discrepancy can not necessarily be claimed.

Questions have been raised about the above view. Some say it should be admitted that discrepancies exist. But before this is admitted, one should examine the implications of such a move. The implication would be that God has presented a faulty revelation of His plan of salvation, but how could an all-knowing God "breathe" words that contain errors or faulty information? Man could do it, but not God. Also, if God allowed errors to arise in Scripture, can we trust any part of it? Logic would say that if errors exist in minor points, the major points could not be trusted. In light of these considerations one may well take the view point that there are no errors in our Scriptures. This can be done honestly. As said before, if alleged errors are closely examined, most can be explained. The few which cannot in all probability could, if all the details surrounding the events were known. It is honest to admit we lack understanding rather than hastily to proclaim that errors exist.

## God's Word Written

by J. C. Wenger

Published by Herald Press, Scottdale, Pennsylvania  
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We may begin this discussion by reminding ourselves that it is true, both that the Bible *contains* God's Word, and also, because of its Holy Spirit inspiration, that it *is* God's Word. And since the entire corpus of Scripture may be recognized as God's Word, there is an ultimate unity to the Book which is dependent upon God Himself. In other words, *the canons of the Old and New Testament Scriptures are a divine intention*. It is agreed on all hands—by both Roman Catholic and Protestant scholars—that when Christ and the apostles refer to the Scriptures they mean the twenty-four books of the Jewish canon, our thirty-nine books. And there is no dispute within Catholic or Protestant circles on the twenty-seven New Testament books. The authority of these New Testament books—just like the twenty-four of the Old—does not rest on ecclesiastical decree or pronouncement. They are in the canon of the church because they were inspired; they are not inspired because of any conciliar action. The twenty-seven books of the New Testament have an authority which the church recognized as *the voice of God*. This voice was heard basically in *apostolic* books, either written or dictated by apostles, or resting on their witness. (Thus Mark wrote down the preaching of Peter, while Paul was Luke's spiritual father.) *The ancient Christian Church had a lively tradition as to which books could be depended on to present apostolic truth*. (A sort of skeleton canon emerged first, evidently within the second century, while a number of the smaller books were added to the canon later. As early as A.D. 367 Athanasius listed our twenty-seven New Testament books and designated them as canonical.)



## Eerdmans' Handbook to the Bible

Published by William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, Grand Rapids, Michigan  
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But what evidence do we have of how the New Testament was formulated? We have sufficient to be able to construct a picture of the position at the close of the 2nd century. By this time our four Gospels, and no others, were in official use. Irenaeus, an early-church father who had contacts with both eastern and western churches, leaves us in no doubt about the 'fourfold' Gospels. Tertullian and other church fathers of the same time confirm this. Much spurious literature circulated (some of it the work of heretics) and this included 'Gospels'. But there is no evidence that any Gospel other than Matthew, Mark, Luke and John was received as Scripture within the orthodox church. By the end of the 2nd century the four Gospels and Acts were indisputably 'accepted' writings. There is also no doubt that the thirteen epistles of Paul were by this time accepted on the same level as the Gospels.

There is less evidence about the remaining books apart from 1 Peter and 1 John. Indeed the history of the canon in the 3rd and 4th centuries revolves around the position of these remaining books. The book of Revelation was certainly used in the 2nd century, but it is not until the 3rd century that evidence for its use becomes widespread. The Epistle to the Hebrews was known and used at an early date (it is quoted by Clement of Rome, in about AD 95), but there was later more reluctance to receive it in the west than in the east. Origen did not believe it was written by Paul, but he did not reject it as an apostolic writing. It was not until the 4th century that it was generally received in the western church. Many churches regarded it as Paul's, but some church fathers (Augustine among them) adopted the same view as Origen. In modern times this view has been almost universally accepted.

The 'general' epistles—2 Peter, 2 and 3 John, James and Jude—encountered resistance in some of the churches, but no reason is given. It would seem to have been doubt about the suitability of their contents, rather than doubt about their origin. The choice of 'approved' books was largely influenced by their suitability for public reading in church, and it is easy to see why these short letters were not much used for this purpose.

So far nothing has been said about church councils. The reason is that no church council made any pronouncement about the canon until long after it had been established and was in use in the individual churches. The books listed by the Council of Laodicea (AD 363) and the similar list agreed at the council at Carthage (AD 397) are identical with our New Testament, except that the former omitted the book of Revelation. It is clear that the New Testament canon was not the result of ecclesiastical pronouncements, but grew in accordance with the needs of the church. The major factor governing selection was 'apostolicity'—the conviction that the books represented the position of the apostolic age.

## History of the World in Christian Perspective

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pages 135, 136

### Early Christians and the Old Testament

**Christ's example.** Jesus frequently quoted from the Old Testament as the Word of God, even to the detail of every "jot or...tittle," every letter or stroke (Matt. 5:18). Jesus never disagreed with any part of the Holy Scripture, although He did take issue with some men's incorrect interpretations of it and additions to it. He always treated the Scripture word for word, never doubting, for example, that there was truly an Adam and an Eve or that God had destroyed Sodom and Gomorrah with fire and brimstone.

The first Christians followed Christ's example and used the Old Testament with reverence. The multiplying Christian churches continued to read and study the Scriptures just as the Jews in the synagogues did. The earliest Christians, of course, were Jews who had accepted Jesus' claim to be the Savior of whom the Old Testament spoke.

**Need for a new witness.** By itself, however, the Old Testament said only that the Savior *would* come, not that He *had* come. The world needed a permanent, completely trustworthy testament (witness) to the actual events of the birth, life, and resurrection of Jesus Christ, especially as the eyewitnesses passed from the scene.

### Writing the Books of the New Testament

**Date and author.** By about A.D. 100, all 27 books of the New Testament had been written, thus meeting the need for a permanent record of the gospel. Either Apostles or men who had an extremely close relationship to an Apostle wrote the books of the New Testament under the inspiration of the Holy Spirit. The Holy Spirit fills all believers, but the Apostles received unique power to carry out their assignment from Jesus. The Holy Spirit taught them all things, and caused them to remember all that Jesus had taught them (John 16:12-15). Thus, books that measured up as works of the Apostles were regarded as the very Word of God, for they established a permanent connection between Christians of all ages and the Apostles, setting a standard for Christian belief and practice. Many writings of men who lived during the time of the Apostles contain references or quotations from books of the New Testament.

**The language used.** The original books of the New Testament were most likely written in Greek. The New Testament employed *koine*, the most common form of the Greek language. Koine was spoken as a second language throughout most of the Roman Empire. Translations into other languages also appeared, but because so many people in the first century A.D. understood Greek, the New Testament books in their original language immediately enjoyed a vast circulation.

By the end of the second century, and possibly by A.D. 125 or even earlier, most Christians had accepted the books of the New Testament as the Word of God.

### The New Testament as the Foundation for Christianity

With the New Testament, Christians had a sure and lasting link to Christ through the Apostles, a definite and solid basis for their beliefs and way of life. They had the written Word of God for order and direction in living and worshiping together. With the New Testament joined to the Old, Christians had the Bible, a book written by men inspired by the Holy Spirit in every word they wrote. Through the ages, true Christians have shared the conviction that the Bible is the inspired Word of God and is the rule of faith and practice for all believers.

☐ That's all for now, folks! Halley's *Bible Handbook* has much material I would like to use. I very likely won't bother typing it all in; I recommend you check it out, though.









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navigation

- [Main page](#)
- [Contents](#)
- [Featured content](#)
- [Current events](#)
- [Random article](#)

search

**Go** Search

interaction

- [About Wikipedia](#)
- [Community portal](#)
- [Recent changes](#)
- [Contact Wikipedia](#)
- [Donate to Wikipedia](#)
- [Help](#)

toolbox

- [What links here](#)
- [Related changes](#)
- [Upload file](#)
- [Special pages](#)
- [Printable version](#)
- [Permanent link](#)
- [Cite this page](#)

languages

- العربية
- Català
- Dansk
- Deutsch
- Ελληνικά
- Español
- Français
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- Italiano
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## James the Just

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**Saint James the Just** (**Hebrew**: יֵשׁוּעַ) (**Greek** Ἰάκωβος), (died AD 62), also known as *James of Jerusalem*, *James Adelpotheos*, or *James, the Brother of the Lord*, was an important figure in **Early Christianity**. He is generally identified by Roman Catholics with **James, son of Alphaeus** and **James the Less**.<sup>[1]</sup>

According to the [Church Fathers](#), he has posthumously been described as the first [Bishop of Jerusalem](#), and is believed to be the author of the [Epistle of James](#) in the [New Testament](#), the first of the [Seventy Apostles](#), and originator of the [Apostolic Decree](#) of Acts 15. In the [Epistle to the Galatians](#) [Paul of Tarsus](#) describes his first visit to [Jerusalem](#) where he met James and [John](#) and stayed with [Cephas](#). James is described by [Josephus](#) and the New Testament as being "the brother of Jesus", and in the [Liturgy of St James](#) as "the brother of God" (*Adelphotheos*).<sup>[2]</sup>

## Contents [\[hide\]](#)

- 1 Name
- 2 Life
- 3 Death
- 4 Influence
- 5 Relationship to Jesus
  - 5.1 Stepbrother
  - 5.2 Full brother
  - 5.3 Half-brother
  - 5.4 Other relationships
    - 5.4.1 Spiritual brother
    - 5.4.2 Cousin
    - 5.4.3 Vaguely related
- 6 The ossuary
- 7 Notes
- 8 External links
- 9 Bibliography

## Name

[edit]

James was called "the Just" because of his righteousness and piety.<sup>[3][4]</sup> The name also helps distinguish him from other important figures in early Christianity of the same name, such as [James, son of Zebedee](#).

He is sometimes referred in [Eastern Christianity](#) as "James Adelphotheos," i.e. "James the Brother of God" ([Greek](#): Ιάκωβος ὁ Ἀδελφός), based on New Testament descriptions, though different interpretations of his precise relationship to Jesus developed based on Christian beliefs about [Mary, the mother of Jesus](#), who was designated [Theotokos](#) by the 431 [Council of Ephesus](#). Therefore, he may simply have been Jesus' cousin and referred to as "the brother of our Lord."

## Life

[edit]

The canonical writings of the [New Testament](#), as well as other written sources from the [Early Church](#), provide some insights into James' life and his role in the [Early Church](#). There is mention of him in the [Gospel of John](#) and the early portions of the [Acts of the Apostles](#). The [Synoptics](#) mention his name, but no further information. However, the later chapters of the [Acts of the Apostles](#) provide evidence that James was an important figure in the Christian community of [Jerusalem](#).

According to Jerome, James was the son of Joseph, and of Mary sister of the mother of our Lord of whom John makes mention in his book. After the Passion he was ordained by the Apostles [Bishop of Jerusalem](#). In describing James' ascetic lifestyle, [Jerome, \*De Viris Illustribus\*](#), quotes Hegesippus' account of James from the fifth book of Hegesippus' lost *Commentaries*:

After the apostles, James the brother of the Lord surnamed the Just was made head of the Church at Jerusalem. Many indeed are called James. This one was holy from his mother's womb. He drank neither wine nor strong drink, ate no flesh, never shaved or anointed himself with ointment or bathed. He alone had the privilege of entering the [Holy of Holies](#), since indeed he did not use woollen vestments but linen and went alone into the temple and prayed in behalf of the people, insomuch that his knees were reputed to have acquired the hardness of camels' knees.<sup>[5]</sup>

Since it was unlawful for any but the high priest of the temple to enter the Holy of Holies, and then only once a year on *Yom Kippur*, Jerome's quotation from Hegesippus indicates that James was considered a high priest. The Pseudo-Clementine Recognitions suggest this.<sup>[6]</sup>

Jerome quotes the non-canonical [Gospel according to the Hebrews](#) thus: "Now the Lord, after he had given his grave clothes to the servant of the priest, appeared to James, for James had sworn that he would not eat bread from that hour in which he had drunk the Lord's cup until he should see him risen from the dead.' And a little further on the Lord says, 'bring a table and bread.' And immediately it is added, 'He took bread and blessed and broke and gave it to James the Just and said to him, 'My brother, eat your bread, for the Son of Man is risen from the dead.'"" And so he ruled the church of Jerusalem thirty years, that is until the seventh year of Nero,<sup>[7]</sup> (See [Jerome](#) and the [Early Church Fathers](#) )

The [Gospel of Thomas](#) confirms that James was an important leader stating "The disciples said to Jesus: We know that you will depart from us; who is it who will lead us?" Jesus said to them, "Wherever you have come from, go to James the Just, for whom heaven and earth came to be" [\[8\]\[9\]](#)

**Paul** further describes James as being one of the persons to whom the risen Christ showed himself (1 [Corinthians](#) 15:3–8); later in 1 [Corinthians](#), Paul mentions James in a way that suggests James had been married (9:5); and in [Galatians](#), Paul lists James with Cephas (better known as [Peter](#)) and [John](#) as the three "pillars" of the Church (2:9), and who will minister to the "circumcised" (in general [Jews](#) and Jewish [Proselytes](#)) in Jerusalem, while Paul and his fellows will minister to the "uncircumcised" (in general [Gentiles](#))(2:12). These terms (circumcised/uncircumcised) are generally interpreted to mean [Jews](#) and [Greeks](#), who were predominant; however, this is an oversimplification as 1st century [Iudaea Province](#) also had some Jews who no longer circumcised, and some Greeks (called [Proselytes](#) or [Judaizers](#)) and others such as Egyptians, Ethiopians, and Arabs who did.

When Peter, having miraculously escaped from prison, must flee Jerusalem due to [Herod Agrippa's](#) persecution, he asks that James be informed (Acts 12:17).

When the Christians of [Antioch](#) were concerned over whether Gentile Christians need be [circumcised](#) to be saved, they sent Paul and [Barnabas](#) to confer with the [Jerusalem church](#). James played a prominent role in the formulation of the [council's](#) decision (Acts 15:13ff). James was the last named figure to speak, after Peter, Paul and Barnabas; he delivered what he calls his "decision" ([Acts 15:19](#) [NRSV](#))—the original sense is closer to "opinion".<sup>[10]</sup> He supported them all in being against the requirement (Peter had cited his earlier revelation from God regarding Gentiles), and suggested prohibitions about [eating blood](#) as well as meat sacrificed to [idols](#) and [fornication](#). This became the ruling of the Council, agreed upon by all the apostles and elders, and sent to the other churches by letter.

When Paul arrives in Jerusalem to deliver the money he raised for the faithful there, it is to James that he speaks, and it is James who insists that Paul ritually cleanse himself at [Herod's Temple](#) to prove his faith and deny rumors of teaching rebellion against the [Torah](#) (Acts 21:18ff) (a charge of [antinomianism](#)).

Tradition, supported by inferences in Scripture, holds that James led the Jerusalem group as its first bishop or patriarch. This is not necessarily a point against the [primacy of Peter](#) in the early Church, and subsequently Roman Catholicism. Though James and not Peter was the first bishop of that group, Roman Catholics believe the bishop of Jerusalem was not by that fact the head of the Christian church, since the leadership rested in Peter as the "Rock" and "Chief Shepherd".<sup>[11]</sup> [John Chrysostom](#) opined: "If anyone should say, 'Why then was it James who received the See of Jerusalem?' I should reply that he [Christ] made Peter the teacher not of that See, but of the world."<sup>[12]</sup> It has been suggested that Peter entrusted the Jerusalem community to James when he was forced to leave

### ***Saint James the Just***

Icon of James

## Martyr, Adelphotheos

<b>Born</b>	unknown
<b>Died</b>	62, Jerusalem
<b>Venerated in</b>	All <a href="#">Christianity</a>
<b>Canonized</b>	pre-congregation
<b>Feast</b>	<a href="#">May 3</a> ( <a href="#">Roman Catholic</a> ), <a href="#">May 1</a> ( <a href="#">Anglican</a> ), <a href="#">October 23</a> ( <a href="#">Lutheran</a> )
<b>Attributes</b>	fuller's club; man holding a book
<b>Controversy</b>	<a href="#">James</a> is sometimes identified with <a href="#">James</a> , son of <a href="#">Alphaeus</a> and <a href="#">James the Less</a> . There is disagreement about the exact relationship to Jesus.



Jerusalem.<sup>[13]</sup> According to the Church historian Eusebius, Clement of Alexandria in the late second century stated the following concerning the appointment of James to the Jerusalem episcopacy, "For they say that Peter and James and John after the ascension of our Saviour, as if also preferred by our Lord, strove not after honor, but chose James the Just bishop of Jerusalem".<sup>[14]</sup>

Death

[edit]

According to a [passage in Josephus's \*Jewish Antiquities\*](#), (xx.9) "the brother of Jesus, who was called Christ, whose name was James" met his death after the death of the procurator [Porcius Festus](#), yet before [Luceius Albinus](#) took office (*Antiquities* 20,9) — which has thus been dated to 62. The [High Priest Ananus ben Ananus](#) took advantage of this lack of imperial oversight to assemble a [Sanhedrin](#) (although the correct translation of the Greek 'synhedion kriton' is 'a council of judges') who condemned James "on the charge of breaking the law," then had him executed by [stoning](#). Josephus reports that Ananus' act was widely viewed as little more than judicial murder, and offended a number of "those who were considered the most fair-minded people in the City, and strict in their observance of the Law," who went as far as meeting Albinus as he entered the province to petition him about the matter. In response, King Agrippa replaced Ananus with Jesus, the son of Damneus.

Though the passage in general is almost universally accepted as original to Josephus, some challenge the identification of the James whom Ananus had executed with James the Just, considering the words, "who was called Christ," a later interpolation. (See [Josephus on Jesus](#).)

Eusebius, while quoting Josephus' account, also records otherwise lost passages from [Hegesippus](#) (see links below), and [Clement of Alexandria](#) (*Historia Ecclesiae*, 2.23). Hegesippus' account varies somewhat from what Josephus reports, and may have been an attempt to reconcile the various accounts by combining them. According to Hegesippus, the scribes and [Pharisees](#) came to James for help in putting down Christian beliefs. The record says:

They came, therefore, in a body to James, and said: "We entreat thee, restrain the people: for they are gone astray in their opinions about Jesus, as if he were the Christ. We entreat thee to persuade all who have come hither for the day of the passover, concerning Jesus. For we all listen to thy persuasion; since we, as well as all the people, bear thee testimony that thou art just, and shovest partiality to none. Do thou, therefore, persuade the people not to entertain erroneous opinions concerning Jesus: for all the people, and we also, listen to thy persuasion. Take thy stand, then, upon the summit of the temple, that from that elevated spot thou mayest be clearly seen, and thy words may be plainly audible to all the people. For, in order to attend the passover, all the tribes have congregated hither, and some of the Gentiles also."<sup>[15]</sup>

To the scribes' and Pharisees' dismay, James boldly testified that Christ "Himself sitteth in heaven, at the right hand of the Great Power, and shall come on the clouds of heaven." *The scribes and pharisees then said to themselves*, "We have not done well in procuring this testimony to Jesus. But let us go up and throw him down, that they may be afraid, and not believe him.

Accordingly, the scribes and Pharisees

...threw down the just man... [and] began to stone him: for he was not killed by the fall; but he turned, and kneeled down, and said: "I beseech Thee, Lord God our Father, forgive them; for they know not what they do.

And, while they were thus stoning him to death, one of the priests, the sons of [Rechab](#), the son of Rechabim, to whom testimony is borne by Jeremiah the prophet, began to cry aloud, saying: "Cease, what do ye? The just man is praying for us." But one among them, one of the fullers, took the staff with which he was accustomed to wring out the garments he dyed, and hurled it at the head of the just man.

And so he suffered martyrdom; and they buried him on the spot, and the pillar erected to his memory still remains, close by the temple. This man was a true witness to both Jews and Greeks that Jesus is the Christ.

—Fragments from the Acts of the Church; Concerning the Martyrdom of James, the Brother of the Lord, from Book 5.<sup>[16]</sup>

[Vespasian's](#) siege and capture of Jerusalem delayed the selection of [Simeon of Jerusalem](#) to succeed James.

According to Schaff in 1904 this account by "Hegesippus has been cited over and over again by historians as assigning the date of the martyrdom to 69 AD" though he challenged the assumption that Hegesippus gives anything to denote such a date.<sup>[16]</sup>

Josephus' account of James' death is more credible because the Acts of Apostles doesn't mention anything about James after the year 60.<sup>[citation needed]</sup> Josephus, however, does not mention in his writings how James was buried, which makes it hard for scholars to determine what happened to James after his death.

[Robert Eisenman](#) argues that the popularity of James and the illegality of his death may have triggered the [First Jewish-Roman War](#) from 66 to 73 C.E.<sup>[17]</sup>

Influence

[edit]

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The *[Epistle of James](#)* has been traditionally attributed to James the Just. A number of modern Biblical scholars, such as [Raymond E. Brown](#),<sup>[citation needed]</sup> while admitting the Greek of this epistle is too fluent for someone whose mother tongue is [Aramaic](#), argue that it expresses a number of his ideas, as rewritten either by a scribe<sup>[citation needed]</sup> or by a follower of James the Just. Other scholars, such as Luke Timothy Johnson and James Adamson, argue that the historical James could have had such fluency in Greek, and could conceivably have authored the Epistle himself.<sup>[citation needed]</sup>

Modern historians of the early Christian churches tend to place James in the tradition of [Jewish Christianity](#); where [Paul](#) emphasized faith over observance of [Mosaic Law](#), which he considered a burden, an [antinomian](#) disposition, James is thought to have espoused the opposite position which is derogatively called [Judaizing](#). One corpus commonly cited as proof of this are the *Recognitions* and *Homilies of Clement* (also known as the [Clementine literature](#)), versions of a novel that has been dated to as early as the 2nd century, where James appears as a saintly figure who is assaulted by an unnamed enemy some modern critics think may be Paul. Scholar [James D. G. Dunn](#) has proposed that [Peter](#) was the *bridge-man* (i.e. the *pontifex maximus*) between the two other "prominent leading figures": Paul and James the Just.<sup>[18]</sup>

[Robert Eisenman](#) and [James Tabor](#)<sup>[19]</sup> have set forth a thesis that James and the Nazorean Jews were marginalized by Paul and the Gentile Christians who followed him, a thesis that has been widely criticized for his recreation of the hostile skirmishes between Judaism and [Pauline Christianity](#), relating his reconstruction to "proto-Christian" elements of the [Essenes](#), as represented in the [Dead Sea scrolls](#). Some of the criticism deconstructs as Pauline apologetics, but Eisenman is equally harsh on the Nazorean Jews at Jerusalem, whom he portrays as a nationalistic, priestly and xenophobic sect of ultra-legal pietists.<sup>[17]</sup>

Some scholars, such as [Ben Witherington](#), believe that the conflict between these two positions has been overemphasized and that the two actually held quite similar beliefs.

Some [apocryphal gospels](#) testify to the reverence Jewish followers of Jesus (like the [Ebionites](#)) had for James. The *[Gospel of the Hebrews](#)* fragment 21 relates the risen Jesus' appearance to James. The *[Gospel of Thomas](#)* (one of the works included in the [Nag Hammadi library](#)), saying 12, relates that the disciples asked Jesus, "We are aware that you will depart from us. Who will be our leader?" Jesus said to him, "No matter where you come [from] it is to James the Just that you shall go, for whose sake heaven and earth have come to exist."

Fragment X of [Papias](#) refers to "James the bishop and apostle". [Epiphanius'](#) Panarion 29.4 describes James as a [Nazirite](#).

The [pseudepigraphical \*First Apocalypse of James\*](#) associated with James's name mentions many details, some of which may reflect early traditions: he is said to have authority over the twelve Apostles and the early church; this work also adds, somewhat puzzlingly, that James left Jerusalem and fled to [Pella](#) before the Roman siege of that city in 70 CE. (Ben Witherington suggests what is meant by this was that James' bones were taken by the early Christians who had fled Jerusalem).

The *[Apocryphon of James](#)*, the sole copy of which was found in the [Nag Hammadi library](#), and which may have been written in Egypt in the third century,<sup>[20]</sup> recounts a post-resurrection appearance of the risen Christ to James and Peter which James is said to have recorded in Hebrew. In the dialogue, Peter speaks twice (3:12; 9:1) but misunderstands Jesus. Only James is addressed by name (6:20) and James is the more dominant of the two.

The *[Protevangelion of James](#)* (or "[Infancy Gospel of James](#)"), a work of the 2nd century, also presents itself as written by James — a sign that his authorship would lend authority — and so do several tractates in the codices found at [Nag Hammadi](#).



Relationship to Jesus

[edit]

Jesus' "brothers" — James as well as [Jude](#), [Simon](#) and [Joses](#) — are mentioned in [Matthew](#) 13:55, [Mark](#) 6:3 and by Paul in [Galatians](#) 1:19. Since James' name always appears first in lists, this suggests he was the eldest among them.<sup>[19]</sup> Even in the passage in [Josephus' Jewish Antiquities](#) (20.9.1) the Jewish historian describes James as "the brother of Jesus who is called Christ,".

Paul refers to James, at that time the only prominent Christian James in Jerusalem, as an [Apostle](#), hence his identification by some with [James, son of Alphaeus](#). In Galatians 1:18–19, Paul, recounting his conversion, recalls "Then after three years I went up to Jerusalem to visit [Cephas](#), and tarried with him fifteen days. But other of the apostles saw I none, save James the Lord's brother."

While most Christians believe that Jesus was, as the Son of God, born of a [virgin](#), defining the relationship of James the Just to Jesus requires some further discussion in accordance with the [Catholic](#) and [Eastern Orthodox](#) belief in the [Perpetual Virginity of Mary](#), the belief that Mary's virginity continued even after Jesus' birth.

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Stepbrother

[edit]

The most commonly held belief by [Eastern Orthodox](#) and [Catholics](#) alike is that James was the **stepbrother** of Jesus.<sup>[*citation needed*]</sup> The [Protevangelium](#) of James assumes the Greek nature of Jewish practices during this period in history and says that Mary was betrothed to an older relative in order to preserve her virginity (he could not have had sex with her, it would have been incest); that Joseph already had children - James was already a boy when Jesus was born. The Protevangelium of James is one of the earliest documents (AD 150) and although it was not included in scripture, its traditional testimony was accepted by the early church.<sup>[*citation needed*]</sup>

Full brother

[edit]

It is believed by some<sup>[*who?*][*citation needed*]</sup> that the Jews living in Jerusalem in Christ's time still adhered to the Mosaic Law<sup>[*citation needed*]</sup>, which advised married couples to be fruitful and have many children and that this would indicate, assuming Mary and Joseph were average Jews, that they<sup>[*citation needed*]</sup> would have had more children after Mary gave birth to Jesus, thus making James a **full brother** of Jesus assuming Jesus was the biological son of Joseph, and not miraculously conceived<sup>[*citation needed*]</sup>. Notably, Josephus (*Antiquities* 20.200) calls James a *brother* of Jesus. He does not call him a half-brother (*homomhtrios adelphos* or *homopatros adelphos*), which are the terms usually used by Josephus to describe half-brothers<sup>[*citation needed*]</sup>, nor does he call James a stepbrother or a cousin of Jesus.

Half-brother

[edit]

For proponents of the doctrine of Jesus' virgin birth, the claim that James may have been a full brother of Jesus is unacceptable; at most James and the other brethren of Jesus would have been [co-uterine half-brothers](#). This is the view of most [Protestants](#), who believe Mary and Joseph lived as a sexually active married couple after the birth of Jesus, as they believe is stated in Matthew 1:25.

A variant on this is presented by James Tabor,<sup>[19]</sup> who argues that after the early and childless death of Joseph, Mary married [Clopas](#), whom he accepts as a younger brother of Joseph, according to the [Levirate](#) law. According to this view Clopas fathered James and the later siblings but not Jesus, who whilst legally adopted by Joseph, is presumed to be the product of an earlier pre-marital coupling, possibly with [Panthera](#).

[Crossan](#) suggested that he was probably Jesus' older brother.<sup>[21]</sup>

Other relationships

[edit]

Those who assert that James and his brethren are not full or half-siblings of Jesus (the [Roman Catholic](#), [Eastern Orthodox](#) and some Protestant churches) point out that Aramaic and Hebrew tended to use [circumlocutions](#) to point out blood relationships; it is asserted that just calling some people "brothers of Jesus" would not have necessarily implied the same mother.<sup>[22][23]</sup> Rather, something like "sons of the mother of Jesus" would have been used to indicate a common mother. Scholars and theologians who assert this point out that Jesus was called "*the* son of Mary" rather than "a son of Mary" in his hometown (Mark 6:3).<sup>[22]</sup>

Spiritual brother

[edit]

According to the apocryphal [First Apocalypse of James](#), James is not the earthly brother of Jesus, but a spiritual brother.

Cousin

[edit]

James could also have been **cousin** to Jesus, along with the other named "brethren". This is justified by the claim that cousins were also called "brothers" and "sisters" in Jesus' postulated native language, [Aramaic](#); it and [Hebrew](#) do not contain a word for "cousin". Furthermore, the Greek words *adelphos* and *adelphē* were not restricted to their literal meaning of a full brother or sister in the Bible; nor were their plurals.<sup>[22][23]</sup> This use is still common in Greece and other Balkan cultures. This assumes, naturally that the Middle Eastern authors' usage of Greek reflects their way of speaking. The tradition of considering cousins as brothers or sisters is still evident in most Eastern cultures; in some languages the term "cousin" does not even exist.

[Eusebius of Caesarea](#) (c. 275 – 339) reports the tradition that James the Just was the son of [Joseph's](#) brother [Clopas](#), and therefore was of the "brethren" (which he interprets as "cousin") of Jesus described in the New Testament.

This is echoed by Jerome (c. 342 – 419) in *De Viris Illustribus* ("On Illustrious Men") - James is said to be the son of *another Mary*, wife of [Clopas](#) and the "sister" of [Mary, the mother of Jesus](#) - in the following manner:

James, who is called the brother of the Lord, surnamed the Just, the son of Joseph by another wife, as some think, but, as appears to me, the son of Mary, sister of the mother of our Lord of whom John makes mention in his book...

Jerome refers to the scene of the Crucifixion in John 19:25, where three Marys - the mother of Jesus, Mary of Clopas, and Mary Magdalene - are said to be witnesses. John also mentions the "sister" of the mother of Jesus, often identified with Mary of Clopas due to grammar. Mary "of Clopas" is often interpreted as Mary "wife of Clopas". Mary of Nazareth and Mary of Clopas also need not be literally sisters, in light of the usage of the said words in Greek, Hebrew and Aramaic.<sup>[22]</sup>

Mary of Clopas is suggested to be the same as "Mary, the mother of James the younger and Joses", "Mary the mother of James and Joseph" and the "other Mary" in Jesus' crucifixion and post-resurrection accounts in the [Synoptic Gospels](#). Proponents of this identification argue that the writers of the Synoptics would just have called this Mary "the mother of Jesus" if she was indeed meant to be the mother of Jesus, given the importance of her son's crucifixion and resurrection: they also note that the mother of James and Joses is called "Maria" whereas the mother of Jesus is "Mariam" or "Marias" in Greek. These proponents find it unlikely that Mary would be referred to by her biological children other than Jesus at such a significant time (James happens to be the brother of one Joses, as spelled in [Mark](#), or Joseph, as in [Matthew](#)).<sup>[22][23][24]</sup>

Jerome's opinion suggests an identification of James the Just with the Apostle [James, son of Alphaeus](#); *Clopas* and *Alphaeus* are thought to be different Greek renderings of the Aramaic name *Halpai*.<sup>[23]</sup> Despite this, some biblical scholars tend to distinguish them; this is also not Roman Catholic dogma, though a traditional teaching.

Since this Clopas is, according to Eusebius, Joseph of Nazareth's brother (see above) and this Mary is said to be Mary of Nazareth's sister, James could be related to Jesus by blood and law.<sup>[22]</sup>

This view of James-as-cousin gained prominence in the [Roman Catholic Church](#), displacing the "stepbrother" view to an extent. Roman Catholics may choose for themselves<sup>[22]</sup> whether James was a stepbrother or cousin of Jesus, since either could be true.

Vaguely related

[edit]

Also, Jesus and James could be related in some other way, not strictly "cousins", following the non-literal application of the term *adelphos* and the Aramaic term for "brother".<sup>[22][23]</sup> Being close blood relatives, James and his kin could have been treated as brothers to Jesus anyway.







Land | Palestinian Roman Catholic saints | Letter writers | Followers of Jesus | 1st-century bishops | Judeo-Christian topics | Burials at the Cathedral of St. James, Jerusalem | 1st-century Christian martyr saints | People executed by stoning | Early Christianity and Judaism

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*For other people and places called **Saint James**, see [Saint James \(disambiguation\)](#).*

James, son of Zebedee (d. 44) or Yaakov Ben-Zebdi/Bar-Zebdi, was one of the [Twelve Apostles](#) of Jesus. He was a son of [Zebedee](#) and [Salome](#), and brother of [John the Apostle](#). He is also called **James the Greater** to distinguish him from [James, son of Alphaeus](#), who is also known as James the Less. James is described as one of the first disciples to join Jesus. The [Synoptic Gospels](#) state that James and John were with their father by the seashore when Jesus called them to follow him. [[Matt. 4:21-22](#)] [[Mk. 1:19-20](#)] According to the [Gospel of Mark](#), James and John were called *Boanerges*, or the "Sons of Thunder". [[Mark 3:17](#)] James was one of only three apostles whom Jesus selected to bear witness to his [Transfiguration](#).<sup>[1]</sup> The [Acts of the Apostles](#) records that [Agrippa I](#) had James executed by sword. [[Acts 12:1-2](#)] making him the first of the apostles to be [martyred](#).

- 1 Veneration
- 2 James and Spain
- 3 Military Order
- 4 Saint James in the Kingdom of Judaiah
- 5 See also
- 6 References
- 7 External links

## [edit]

The **feast day** of St James is celebrated on **July 25** on the **liturgical calendars** of the **Roman Catholic**, **Anglican**, **Lutheran** and certain **Protestant** churches. He is commemorated on **April 30** in the **Orthodox Christian liturgical calendar** (for those churches which follow the traditional **Julian Calendar**, April 30 currently falls on **May 13** of the modern **Gregorian Calendar**).

## [edit]

Santiago Matamoros ("Saint James the Moor-slayer") ☐

According to ancient local tradition, on **2 January** of the year AD 40, the **Virgin Mary** appeared to James on the bank of the **Ebro River** at **Caesaraugusta**, while he was preaching the Gospel in Iberia. She appeared upon a pillar, **Nuestra Señora del Pilar**, and that pillar is conserved and venerated within the present **Basílica of Our Lady of the Pillar**, in **Zaragoza**, Spain. Following that apparition, St James returned to Judea, where he was beheaded by King **Herod Agrippa I** in the year 44. <sup>[4][5]</sup>

The 12th-century *Historia Compostellana* commissioned by **bishop** Diego Gelmírez provides a summary of the legend of St James as it was believed at Compostela. Two propositions are central to it: first, that St James preached the gospel in Iberia as well as in the Holy Land; second, that after his **martyrdom** at the hands of Herod Agrippa I his disciples carried his body by sea to Iberia, where they landed at Padrón on the coast of Galicia, and took it inland for burial at [Santiago de Compostela](#).

The translation of his relics from Judea to Galicia in the northwest of Iberia was effected, in legend, by a series of miraculous happenings: decapitated in Jerusalem with a sword by Herod

Agrippa himself, his body was taken up by angels, and sailed in a rudderless, unattended boat to **Iria Flavia** in Iberia, where a massive rock closed around his relics, which were later removed to **Compostela**. An even later tradition states that he miraculously appeared to fight for the Christian army during the **battle of Clavijo**, and was henceforth called **Matamoros** (**Moor-slayer**). **Santiago y cierra España** ("St James and strike for Spain") has been the traditional **battle cry** of Spanish armies.

“ St James the Moorslayer, one of the most valiant saints and knights the world ever had ... has been given by God to Spain for its patron and protection. ”

—Cervantes, Don Quixote

A similar miracle is related about [San Millán](#). The possibility that a cult of James was instituted to supplant the Galician cult of [Priscillian](#) (executed in 385) who was widely venerated across the north of Iberia as a martyr to the bishops rather than as a heretic should not be overlooked. This was cautiously raised by Henry Chadwick in his book on Priscillian<sup>[4]</sup>; it is not the traditional Roman Catholic view. The *Catholic Encyclopedia* of 1908, however, states:

Although the tradition that James founded an apostolic see in Iberia was current in the year 700, no certain mention of such tradition is to be found in the genuine writings of early writers nor in the early councils; the first certain mention we find in the ninth century, in *Notker*, a monk of *St. Gall* (*Martyrologia*, 25 July), *Walafrid Strabo* (*Poema de XII Apostoli*), and others.

The tradition was not unanimously admitted afterwards, while numerous modern scholars, following [Louis Duchesne](#), reject it. The [Bollandists](#) however defended it (their *Acta Sanctorum*, July, VI and VII, gives further sources). The suggestion began to be made from the 9th century that, as well as evangelizing in Iberia, his body may have been brought to Compostela. No earlier tradition places the burial of St James in Hispania. A rival tradition, places the relics of the Apostle in the church of [St. Saturnin at Toulouse](#), but it is not improbable that such sacred relics should have been divided between two churches.

The authenticity of the relics at Compostela was asserted in the [Bull](#) of [Pope Leo XIII](#), *Omnipotens Deus*, of [1 November 1884](#).

The *Catholic Encyclopedia* (1908) registered several "difficulties" or bases for doubts of this tradition beyond the late appearance of the legend:

James suffered martyrdom<sup>[Acts 12:1-2]</sup> in AD 44. According to the tradition of the early Church, he had not yet left Jerusalem

He is depicted clothed as a pilgrim; note the scallop shell on his shoulder and his staff and pilgrim's hat beside him

<b>Born</b>	1st century, <a href="#">Bethsaida, Galilee</a>
<b>Died</b>	44 AD, <a href="#">Judea</a>
<b>Venerated</b>	All <a href="#">Christianity</a>
<b>in</b>	
<b>Canonized</b>	<a href="#">Pre-Congregation</a>
<b>Major shrine</b>	<a href="#">Cathedral of Santiago de Compostela, Galicia (Spain)</a>
<b>Feast</b>	<a href="#">July 25 (Western Christianity)</a> <a href="#">April 30 (Eastern Christianity)</a> <a href="#">December 30 (Hispanic Church)</a>
<b>Attributes</b>	<a href="#">Scallop</a> , traveller's hat
<b>Patronage</b>	<b>Places</b> <a href="#">Acora Pueblo, Sahuayo, Santiago de Querétaro, Galicia, Guatemala, Nicaragua, Spain</a>
	<b>Professions</b> <a href="#">Veterinarians, equestrians, furriers, tanners, pharmacists</a>

Icon of James, the Son of Zebedee, 18th century (Kizhi monastery, Karelia, Russia).



at this time.<sup>[6]</sup> St Paul in his *Epistle to the Romans* written after AD 44, expressed his intention to avoid "building on someone else's foundation",<sup>[Rom 15:20]</sup> and thus visit Spain<sup>[15:24]</sup> which was presumably unevangelized.



The tradition at Compostela placed the discovery of the relics of the saint in the time of king **Alfonso II** (791-842) and of bishop Theodemir of **Iria**. These traditions were the basis for the pilgrimage route that began to be established in the 9th century, and the **shrine** dedicated to James at **Santiago de Compostela**, in **Galicia** in **Spain**, became the most famous pilgrimage site in the Christian world.<sup>[*citation needed*]</sup> The **Way of St. James** is a tree of routes that cross Western Europe and arrive at Santiago through Northern Spain. Eventually James became the **patron saint** of Spain.

The English name "**James**" comes from Italian "Giacomo", a variant of "Giacobo" derived from *Iacobus* (**Jacob**) in **Latin**, itself from the **Greek** *Iakovos*. In French, Jacob is translated "Jacques". In eastern Spain, Jacobus became "Jacome" or "Jaime"; in Catalunya, it became Jaume, in western Iberia it became "Iago", from Hebrew Ya'aqov, which when prefixed with "Sant" became "Santiago" in Portugal and Galicia; "Tiago" is also spelled "Diego", which is also the Spanish name of **Saint Didacus of Alcalá**.

James' emblem was the **scallop** shell (or "cockle shell"), and pilgrims to his shrine often wore that symbol on their hats or clothes. The **French** for a **scallop** is *coquille St. Jacques*, which means "cockle (or mollusk) of St James". The **German** word for a scallop is *Jakobsmuschel*, which means "mussel (or clam) of St. James"; the **Dutch** word is *Jacobsschelp*, meaning "shell of St James".

### Military Order [edit]

See also: *Order of Santiago*

The military Order of Santiago or *caballeros santiaguistas* was founded to fight the Moors and later membership became a precious honour. People like **Diego Velázquez** longed for the royal favour that allowed to put on their clothes the red **cross of St James** (a **cross fleury fitchy**, with lower part fashioned as the blade of a sword blade).

### Saint James in the Kingdom of Judaiah [edit]

Saint James had a special place in the **Central African Kingdom of Kongo** because of his association with the founding of Christianity in the country in the late fifteenth century. Portuguese sailors and diplomats brought the saint to Kongo when they first reached the country in 1483. When King **Afonso I of Kongo** whose Kongo name was Mwemba a Nzinga, the second Christian king, was facing a rival, his brother Mpanzu a Kitima, in battle, he reported that a vision of Saint James and the Heavenly Host appeared in the sky, frightened Mpanzu a Kitima's soldiers, and gave Afonso the victory. As a result, he declared that Saint James' feast day (July 25) be celebrated as a national holiday.

Over the years, Saint James day became the central holiday of Kongo. Taxes were collected on that day, and men eligible for military duty were required to appear armed. There were usually regional celebrations as well as one at the capital. In some cases, Kongolese slaves carried the celebration to the New World, and there are celebrations of Saint James Day in Haiti and Puerto Rico carried out by their descendents.

### See also [edit]

- Way of St. James
- Cross of St James
- Saint Peter of Rates
- Hömlí

### References [edit]

- ↑ Matthew 17:1-9, Mark 9:2-8, Luke 9:28-36.
- ↑ History
- ↑ http://www.archicompostela.org/Peregrinos/Estadisticas/estadisticas2006.htm
- ↑ <sup>a</sup> <sup>b</sup> Chadwick, Henry (1976), *Priscillian of Avila*, Oxford University Press
- ↑ Fletcher, Richard A. (1984), *Saint James's Catapult: The Life and Times of Diego Gelmírez of Santiago de Compostela* , Oxford University Press
- ↑ Clement of Alexandria, *Stromateis*, VI; Apollonius, quoted by Eusebius of Caesarea, *Ecclesiastical History* VLxviii)

### External links [edit]

- Catholic Encyclopedia*: St James the Greater
- R. A. Fletcher, *Saint James's Catapult: The Life and Times of Diego Gelmírez of Santiago de Compostela*  Oxford University Press, 1984: chapter 3, "The Early History of the Cult of St. James"
- Apostle James the Brother of St John the Theologian  Orthodox icon and synaxarion

<span>v</span> <span>d</span> <span>e</span>	<b>Twelve Apostles of Jesus Christ</b> — ( <i>See also Paul and Deaths of the Twelve</i> )	<span>[show]</span>
<span>v</span> <span>d</span> <span>e</span>	<b>New Testament people</b>	<span>[show]</span>

Categories: Twelve apostles | Saints from the Holy Land | Eastern Orthodox saints | Palestinian Roman Catholic saints | Christian martyrs of the Roman era | 44 deaths

17th century interpretation of saint James as the Moor-killer from the **Peruvian** school of **Quzco**. The pilgrim hat has become a **Panama hat** and his mantle is that of his military order.

The *Codex Calixtinus* promotes the pilgrimage to Santiago.

Wikimedia Commons has media related to: *Saint James the Great*



## Luther's Treatment of the 'Disputed Books' of the New Testament

Lutheran theologians like to make a distinction between the books of the New Testament which were unanimously received as canonical in the early church (the so-called *Homologoumena* or undisputed books) and the books which were disputed by some (the *Antilegomena*). In this class of 'disputed books' are the Epistle to the Hebrews, James, Jude, 2 Peter, 2 and 3 John, and the Revelation of John. These books are considered to be canonical in modern Lutheran churches, with the caveat that they are not quite on the same level as the other books as complete expressions of evangelical truth, and should be used with care.

Luther himself took the liberty of criticizing some of these books in a polemical manner which few Lutherans today would find completely acceptable. He had a low view of Hebrews, James, Jude, and the Revelation, and so when he published his New Testament in 1522 he placed these books apart at the end. In his Preface to Hebrews, which comes first in the series, he says, "Up to this point we have had to do with the true and certain chief books of the New Testament. The four which follow have from ancient times had a different reputation."

Luther's criticism of these books will perhaps be found disgraceful and even shocking to modern Christians, but it should be pointed out that his attitude was not so shocking in the context of the late Middle Ages. Erasmus had also called into question these four books in the *Annotaciones* to his 1516 Greek New Testament, and their canonicity was doubted by the Roman Catholic Cardinal Cajetan (Luther's opponent at Augsburg. See Reu, *Luther's German Bible*, pp. 175-176). The sad fact is, the Roman Catholic Church had never precisely drawn the boundaries of the biblical canon. It was not necessary to do so under the Roman system, in which the authority of the Scriptures was not much higher than that of tradition, popes, and councils. It was not until the Protestant Reformers began to insist upon the supreme authority of *Scripture alone* that a decision on the 'disputed books' became necessary.

If Luther's negative view of these books were based only upon the fact that their canonicity was disputed in early times, we would have expected him to include 2 Peter among them, because this epistle was doubted more than any other in ancient times. But it is evident from the prefaces that Luther affixed to these four books that his low view of them had more to do with his theological reservations against them than with any historical investigation of the canon.

We give below Luther's prefaces to James, Jude and the Revelation, from the first edition of his New Testament. The English translation and notes are derived from the American edition of *Luther's Works*, vol 35 (St. Louis: Concordia, 1963), pp. 395-399.

### Preface to the Epistles of St. James and St. Jude (1522)

Though this epistle of St. James was rejected by the ancients, <sup>1</sup> I praise it and consider it a good book, because it sets up no doctrines of men but vigorously promulgates the law of God. However, to state my own opinion about it, though without prejudice to anyone, I do not regard it as the writing of an apostle; and my reasons follow.

In the first place it is flatly against St. Paul and all the rest of Scripture in ascribing justification to works. It says that Abraham was justified by his works when he offered his son Isaac; though in Romans 4 St. Paul teaches to the contrary that Abraham was justified apart from works, by his faith alone, before he had offered his son, and proves it by Moses in Genesis 15. Now although this epistle might be helped and an interpretation <sup>2</sup> devised for this justification by works, it cannot be defended in its application to works of Moses' statement in Genesis 15. For Moses is speaking here only of Abraham's faith, and not of his works, as St. Paul demonstrates in Romans 4. This fault, therefore, proves that this epistle is not the work of any apostle.

In the second place its purpose is to teach Christians, but in all this long teaching it does not once mention the Passion, the resurrection, or the Spirit of Christ. He names Christ several times; however he teaches nothing about him, but only speaks of general faith in God. Now it is the office of a true apostle to preach of the Passion and resurrection and office of Christ, and to lay the foundation for faith in him, as Christ himself says in John 15, "You shall bear witness to me." All the genuine sacred books agree in this, that all of them preach and inculcate [treiben] Christ. And that is the true test by which to judge all books, when we see whether or not they inculcate Christ. For all the Scriptures show us Christ, Romans 3; and St. Paul will know nothing but Christ, 1 Corinthians 2. Whatever does not teach Christ is not apostolic, even though St. Peter or St. Paul does the teaching. Again, whatever preaches Christ would be apostolic, even if Judas, Annas, Pilate, and Herod were doing it.

But this James does nothing more than drive to the law and to its works. Besides, he throws things together so chaotically that it seems to me he must have been some good, pious man, who took a few sayings from the disciples of the apostles and thus tossed them off on paper. Or it may perhaps have been written by someone on the basis of his preaching. He calls the law a "law of liberty," though Paul calls it a law of slavery, of wrath, of death, and of sin. <sup>3</sup>

Moreover he cites the sayings of St. Peter: "Love covers a multitude of sins," and again, "Humble yourselves under the hand of God;" also the saying of St. Paul in Galatians 5, "The Spirit lusteth against envy." And yet, in point of time, St. James was put to death by Herod in Jerusalem, before St. Peter. <sup>4</sup> So it seems that this author came long after St. Peter and St. Paul.

In a word, he wanted to guard against those who relied on faith without works, but was unequal to the task in spirit, thought, and words. He mangles the Scriptures and thereby opposes Paul and all Scripture. <sup>5</sup> He tries to accomplish by harping on the law what the apostles accomplish by stimulating people to love. Therefore, I will not have him in my Bible to be numbered among the true chief books, though I would not thereby prevent anyone from including or extolling him as he pleases, for there are otherwise many good sayings in him. One man is no man in worldly things; how, then, should this single man alone avail against Paul and all the rest of Scripture? <sup>6</sup>

Concerning the epistle of St. Jude, no one can deny that it is an extract or copy of St. Peter's second epistle, so very like it are all the words. He also speaks of the apostles like a disciple who comes long after them and cites sayings and incidents that are found nowhere else in the Scriptures. This moved the ancient fathers to exclude this epistle from the main body of the Scriptures. Moreover the Apostle Jude did not go to Greek-speaking lands, but to Persia, as it is said, so that he did not write Greek. Therefore, although I value this book, it is an epistle that need not be counted among the chief books which are supposed to lay the foundations of faith.

### Preface to the Revelation of St. John (1522) <sup>7</sup>

About this book of the Revelation of John, I leave everyone free to hold his own opinions. I would not have anyone bound to my opinion or judgment. I say what I feel. I miss more than one thing in this book, and it makes me consider it to be neither apostolic nor prophetic.

First and foremost, the apostles do not deal with visions, but prophesy in clear and plain words, as do Peter and Paul, and Christ in the gospel. For it befits the apostolic office to speak clearly of Christ and his deeds, without images and visions. Moreover there is no prophet in the Old Testament, to say nothing of the New, who deals so exclusively with visions and images. For myself, I think it approximates the Fourth Book of Esdras; <sup>8</sup> I can in no way detect that the Holy Spirit produced it.

Moreover he seems to me to be going much too far when he commends his own book so highly -- indeed, more than any of the other sacred books do, though they are much more important -- and threatens that if anyone takes away anything from it, God will take away from him, etc. Again, they are supposed to be blessed who keep what is written in this book; and yet no one knows what that is, to say nothing of keeping it. This is just the same as if we did not have the book at all. And there are many far better books available for us to keep.

Many of the fathers also rejected this book a long time ago; <sup>9</sup> although St. Jerome, to be sure, refers to it in exalted terms and says that it is above all praise and that there are as many mysteries in it as words. Still, Jerome cannot prove this at all, and his praise at numerous places is too generous.



Finally, let everyone think of it as his own spirit leads him. My spirit cannot accommodate itself to this book. For me this is reason enough not to think highly of it: Christ is neither taught nor known in it. But to teach Christ, this is the thing which an apostle is bound above all else to do; as Christ says in Acts 1, "You shall be my witnesses." Therefore I stick to the books which present Christ to me clearly and purely.

1. Luther's statement that the epistle was "rejected by the ancients" is only partly true. Its canonical status was doubted by some. Eusebius (died 339) in his Ecclesiastical History (II, xxiii, 25) writes "Such is the story of James, whose is said to be the first of the Epistles called Catholic. It is to be observed that its authenticity is denied, since few of the ancients quote it, as is also the case with the Epistle called Jude's." Eusebius also includes both epistles in his list of 'Disputed Books' (History, III, xxiv, 3). See also the statement by Jerome (d. 420) in his *Liber de Viris Illustribus* (II) concerning the pseudonymity ascribed to the epistle of James and its rather gradual attainment of authoritative status.
2. By *Glose* (literally "gloss") Luther means an interpretation which explains away the apparent meaning.
3. Cf. Rom. 3:20; 4:15; 5:13, 20; 6:15-22; 7:5-13; 8:2; I Cor. 15:58; Gal. 3:23-5:1.
4. The James to whom the book is traditionally ascribed is not the brother of John martyred by Herod (Acts 12:2), as Luther seems to think, but the brother of the Lord (Matt. 13:55) who became head of the apostolic church at Jerusalem (Acts 15:13; Gal. 1:19).
5. The edition of 1530 omitted "in spirit, thought, and words. He mangles the Scriptures and thereby opposes Paul and all Scripture."
6. The edition of 1530 put instead of these last two sentences, "Therefore, I cannot include him among the chief books, though I would not thereby prevent anyone from including or extolling him as he pleases, for there are otherwise many good sayings in him."
7. This short preface appeared in the September Testament of 1522 and in other editions up to 1527. It was supplanted from 1530 on by a much longer preface which offers an interpretation of the symbolism of the book.
8. Luther means II Esdras, which was called IV Esdras in the Vulgate.
9. The canonicity of Revelation was disputed by Marcion, Caius of Rome, Dionysius of Alexandria, Cyril of Jerusalem and the Synod of Laodicea in A.D. 360, though it was accepted by most as Eusebius reports. In the annotations of his edition Erasmus had noted in connection with chapter 4 that the Greeks regarded the book as apocryphal.



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[Bible Research](#) > [Canon](#) > [Luther](#)





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navigation

- [Main page](#)
- [Contents](#)
- [Featured content](#)
- [Current events](#)
- [Random article](#)

interaction

- [About Wikipedia](#)
- [Community portal](#)
- [Recent changes](#)
- [Contact Wikipedia](#)
- [Donate to Wikipedia](#)
- [Help](#)

toolbox

- [What links here](#)
- [Related changes](#)
- [Upload file](#)
- [Special pages](#)
- [Printable version](#)
- [Permanent link](#)
- [Cite this page](#)

## languages

- Simple English
- Česky
- Dansk
- ★ Deutsch
- Español
- العربية
- Français
- हिन्दी
- Italiano
- עברית
- Magyar
- Nederlands
- 日本語
- Norsk (bokmål)
- Polski
- Português
- Română
- Русский
- Suomi
- Svenska
- Tagalog
- Tiếng Việt
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## Monarch (butterfly)

From Wikipedia, the free encyclopedia

The **Monarch** (*Danaus plexippus*) is a **milkweed butterfly** (subfamily Danainae), in the family **Nymphalidae**. It is perhaps the best known of all **North American** butterflies. Since the 19th century, it has been found in **New Zealand**, and in Australia since 1871 where it is called the **Wanderer**.<sup>[3][4][5]</sup> In Europe it is resident in the **Canary Islands**, the **Azores**, and **Madeira**, and is found as an occasional migrant in Western Europe. Its wings feature an easily recognizable orange and black pattern, with a wingspan of 8.9–10.2 centimetres (3½–4 in).<sup>[6]</sup> (The **Viceroy butterfly** has a similar size, color, and pattern, but can be distinguished by an extra black stripe across the hind wing.) Female Monarchs have darker veins on their wings, and the males have a spot called the "**androconium**" in the center of each hind wing.<sup>[7]</sup> from which **pheromones** are released. Males are also slightly larger.

## Contents [\[hide\]](#)

- 1 Taxonomy
- 2 Description
- 3 Range and distribution
- 4 Migration
- 5 Habitat
- 6 Adult food sources
- 7 Reproduction
  - 7.1 Pictorial lifecycle
- 8 Host plants
- 9 Defense against predators
- 10 Relationship with humans
- 11 Threats
  - 11.1 Predators
  - 11.2 Parasites
  - 11.3 Confusion of host plants
- 12 See also
- 13 References
- 14 External links

## Taxonomy

The common name "Monarch" was first published in 1874 by [Samuel H. Scudder](#) because "it is one of the largest of our butterflies, and rules a vast domain".<sup>[8]</sup> But the name may be in honour of King [William III of England](#).<sup>[9]</sup> The Monarch was one of the many species originally described by [Linnaeus](#) in his *Systema Naturae* of 1758. It was first placed in the genus *Papilio*.<sup>[10]</sup> In 1780, [Jan Krzysztof Kluk](#) used the Monarch as the *type species* for a new genus; *Danaus*. Since *Latin grammar* requires that the *specific epithet* and gender names agree it is unclear if the genus *Danaus* is drawn from *Danaus* (Greek [Δαναός](#)), a mythical king of Egypt and great-grandson of *Zeus* or is a masculinised version of *Danaë* (Greek [Δανάη](#)), Danaus's great-great-granddaughter. The species name, *plexippus*, refers to *Plexippus*, one of the 50 sons of *Aegyptus*, Danaus' twin brother.<sup>[8][11]</sup> In *Homeric Greek* δαναος πληξιππος also means "a Greek who beats (= lashes, drives and urges on) horses", i.e. "Greek *charioteer*".

The Monarch is closely related to two very similar [species](#) which formed the *Danaus* (*Danaus*) [subgenus](#) before 2005. The first is the [Jamaican monarch](#) (*D. cleophile*) from [Jamaica](#) and [Hispaniola](#). The second is the [Southern Monarch](#) (*D. erippus*), of [South America](#) south of the Amazon river. The Southern Monarch is almost indistinguishable from the Monarch as an adult, the pupae are somewhat different, and is often considered a subspecies of the Monarch proper. But analysis of [morphological](#), [mtDNA](#) 12S [rRNA](#), [cytochrome c oxidase subunit I](#), [nuclear DNA](#) 18S rRNA and [EF1](#) subunit  $\alpha$  [sequence](#) data by Smith *et al.* (2005) indicates that it is better considered a distinct species. The separation of the Monarch and Southern Monarch is comparatively recent. In all likelihood, the ancestors of the Southern Monarch separated from the Monarch's population some 2 [mya](#), at the end of the [Pliocene](#). At the time [sea levels](#) were higher and the entire [Amazonas](#) lowland was a vast expanse of [brackish](#) swamp that offered hardly any butterfly habitat.<sup>[12]</sup>

Following the review of Smith *et al.* (2005), two sub-species of the Monarch are recognized.<sup>[12]</sup>

- *Danaus p. plexippus*, the nominate subspecies, described by Linnaeus in 1758. It is the migratory subspecies known from most of North America.
- *Danaus p. megalippe*, named in 1826 by [Jacob Hübner](#). It is the non-migratory subspecies, and is found from [Florida](#) and [Georgia](#) southwards, throughout the Caribbean and [Central America](#) to the [Amazon River](#). Three local [forms](#) were at first considered to be other subspecies, but are actually colour varieties of *D. p. megalippe*:
  - *D. p. m. forma leucogyne*, named by [Arthur G. Butler](#) in 1884.
  - *D. p. m. forma portoricensis*, named in 1941 by A.H. Clark.
  - *D. p. m. forma tobagi*, also named in 1941 by A.H. Clark.

### Description

The Monarch's wingspan ranges from 8.9–10.2 cm (3½–4 in.).<sup>[6]</sup> The upper side of the wings is tawny-orange, the veins and margins are black, and in the margins are two series of small white spots. The fore wings also have a few orange spots near the tip. The underside is similar but the tip of the fore wing and hind wing are yellow-brown instead of tawny-orange and the white spots are larger.<sup>[13]</sup>

The male has a black patch of androconial scales responsible for dispersing pheromones on the hind wings, and the black veins on its wing are narrower than the female's. The male is also slightly larger.<sup>[13]</sup>

A color variation has been observed in Australia, New Zealand, Indonesia and the United States as early as the late 1800s. Named *nivosus* by Lepidopterists, it is grayish white in all areas of the wings that are normally orange. Generally it is only about 1% or less of all monarchs, but has maintained populations as high as 10% on O'ahu in Hawai'i, possibly due to selective predation.<sup>[14]</sup>

The eggs are creamy white and later turn pale yellow. They are elongate and subconical, with approximately 23 longitudinal ridges and many fine traverse lines.<sup>[13]</sup> A single egg weighs about 0.46 milligrams (0.0071 gr), and measures about 1.2 millimetres (47 mils) high and 0.9 millimetres (35 mils) wide.<sup>[15][16]</sup>

The caterpillar is banded with yellow, black, and white stripes. The head is also striped with yellow and black. There are two pairs of black filaments, one pair on each end of the body. The caterpillar will reach a length of 5 cm (2 in).<sup>[17]</sup>

The chrysalis is blue-green with a band of black and gold on the end of the abdomen. There are other gold spots on the thorax, the wing bases, and the eyes.<sup>[18]</sup>

Monarch
<div><span></span></div>
Female
<div> <div> {{{image2_alt}}} </div> </div>
Male
Conservation status
<i>Not evaluated</i> (IUCN 3.1)
Scientific classification
Kingdom:
Phylum:
Class:
Order:
Superfamily:
Family:
Subfamily:
Tribe:
Genus:
Species:
Binomial name
<i><b>Danaus plexippus</b></i> (Linnaeus, 1758)
<div><span></span></div>
Synonyms
<i>Danaus archippus</i> (Fabricius, 1793) <sup>[1]</sup>
<i>Danaus menippe</i> (Hübner, 1816) <sup>[2]</sup>

Underside of a *Danaus plexippus plexippus* feeding on nectar from an *Echinacea purpurea* flower



### Range and distribution

In **North America**, the Monarch ranges from southern **Canada** to northern **South America**. It rarely strays to western **Europe** (rarely as far as **Greece**) from being transported by U. S. ships or by flying there if weather and wind conditions are right. It has also been found in **Bermuda**, **Hawaii**, the **Solomons**, **New Caledonia**, **New Zealand**, **Australia**, **New Guinea**, **Ceylon**, **India**, the **Azores**, and the **Canary Islands**.<sup>[18]</sup>

### Migration

Monarchs are especially noted for their lengthy annual migration. In North America they make massive southward migrations starting in August until the first frost. A northward migration takes place in the spring. The monarch is the only butterfly that migrates both north and south as the birds do on a regular basis. But no single individual makes the entire round trip. <sup>[19]</sup>(In Australia, they make limited migrations in cooler areas,<sup>[3]</sup> but the **Blue Tiger** butterfly is better known in Australia for its lengthy migration.<sup>[4]</sup> Female monarchs deposit eggs for the next generation during these migrations. By the end of October, the population east of the **Rocky Mountains** migrates to the **sanctuaries** of the **Mariposa Monarca Biosphere Reserve** in the **Mexican states** of **Michoacán** and **México**. The western population **overwinters** in various sites in central coastal and southern **California**, **United States**, notably in **Pacific Grove** and **Santa Cruz**.



The length of these journeys exceeds the normal lifespan of most monarchs, which is less than two months for butterflies born in early summer. The last generation of the summer enters into a non-reproductive phase known as **diapause** and may live seven months or more.<sup>[7]</sup> During diapause, butterflies fly to one of many overwintering sites. The generation that overwinters generally does not reproduce until it leaves the overwintering site sometime in February and March. It is thought that the overwinter population of those east of the Rockies may reach as far north as **Texas** and **Oklahoma** during the spring migration. It is the second, third and fourth generations that return to their northern locations in the United States and **Canada** in the spring. How the species manages to return to the same overwintering spots over a gap of several generations is still a subject of research; the flight patterns appear to be inherited, based on a

combination of the position of the sun in the sky<sup>[20]</sup> and a time-compensated Sun compass that depends upon a **circadian clock** that is based in their antennae.<sup>[21][22]</sup>

Monarch butterflies are one of the few insects capable of making transatlantic crossings. They are becoming more common in **Bermuda** due to increased usage of **milkweed** as an ornamental plant in flower gardens. Monarch butterflies born in Bermuda remain year round due to the island's mild climate.

A few monarchs turn up in the far southwest of **Great Britain** in years when the wind conditions are right, and have been sighted as far east as Long Bennington. Monarchs can also be found in **New Zealand**. On the islands of **Hawaii** no migrations have been noted.

Monarch butterflies are poisonous or distasteful to birds because of **milkweed** poison stored by the caterpillar stage; their bright colors are **warning colors**. During hibernation monarch butterflies sometimes suffer losses because hungry birds pick through them looking for the butterflies with the least amount of poison, but in the process killing those that they reject.

### Habitat

The Monarch can be found in a wide range of habitats such as fields, meadows, prairie remnants, urban and suburban parks, gardens, and roadsides. It overwinters in conifer groves.<sup>[23][24]</sup>

### Adult food sources

Adult Monarchs have been seen on a number of different nectar plants. Here is a list of some of them:

- *Apocynum cannabinum* - Indian Hemp
- *Asclepias incarnata* - Swamp Milkweed
- *Asclepias syriaca* - Common Milkweed
- *Asclepias tuberosa* - Butterfly Weed
- *Aster* sp. - asters
- *Cirsium* sp. - thistles
- *Daucus carota* - Wild Carrot
- *Dipsacus sylvestris* - Teasel
- *Erigeron canadensis* - Horseweed
- *Eupatorium maculatum* - Spotted Joe-Pye Weed
- *Eupatorium perfoliatum* - Common Boneset
- *Hesperis matronalis* - Dame's Rocket
- *Medicago sativa* - Alfalfa
- *Solidago* sp. - golden rods
- *Syringa vulgaris* - Lilac
- *Trifolium pratense* - Red Clover
- *Vernonia altissima* - Tall Ironweed<sup>[24]</sup>

Males will also take in moisture and minerals from damp soil and wet gravel, a behavior known as puddling. The Monarch has also been noticed puddling at an oil stain on pavement.<sup>[24]</sup>

### Reproduction

The mating period for the overwinter population occurs in the spring, just prior to migration from the overwintering sites. The courtship is fairly simple and less dependent on chemical pheromones in comparison with other species in its genus.<sup>[25]</sup> Courtship is composed of two distinct stages, the aerial phase and the ground phase. During the aerial phase, the male pursues, nudges, and eventually takes down the female. Copulation occurs during the ground phase where the male and female remain attached for about 30 to 60 minutes.<sup>[26]</sup> A spermatophore is transferred from the male to the female. Along with sperm, the spermatophore is thought to provide the female with energy resources that aid her in carrying out reproduction and remigration. The overwinter population returns only as far north as they need to go to find the early milkweed growth; in the case of the eastern butterflies that is commonly southern Texas. The life cycle of a monarch includes a change of form called complete **metamorphosis**. The monarch goes through four radically different stages:

1. The eggs are laid by the females during spring and summer breeding months.
2. The eggs hatch (after 4 days), revealing worm-like larvae, the **caterpillars**. The caterpillars consume their egg cases, then feed on **milkweed**, and sequester substances called **cardenolides**, a type of **cardiac glycoside**. During the caterpillar stage, monarchs store energy in the form of **fat** and **nutrients** to carry them through the non-feeding **pupa** stage. The caterpillar stage lasts around 2 weeks.
3. In the **pupa** or **chrysalis** stage, the caterpillar spins a silk pad on a twig, leaf, etc., and hangs from this pad by its last pair of prolegs. It hangs upside down in the shape of a 'J', and then molts, leaving itself encased in an articulated green **exoskeleton**. At this point, hormonal changes occur, leading to the development of a butterfly (metamorphosis). The chrysalis darkens (actually becomes transparent) a day before it emerges, and its orange and black wings can be seen.
4. The mature butterfly emerges after about two pupal weeks and hangs from the split chrysalis for several hours until its wings are dry (often in the morning). Meanwhile fluids are pumped into the crinkled wings until they become full and stiff. Some of this orangey fluid (called meconium) drips from the wings.





Finally (usually in the afternoon) the monarch spreads its wings, quivers them to be sure they are stiff, and then flies away , to feed on a variety of flowers, including milkweed flowers, red clover, and goldenrod.

Monarchs can live a life of two to eight weeks in a garden having their host [Asclepias](#) plants and sufficient flowers for nectar. This is especially true if the flower garden happens to be surrounded by native forest that seems to be lacking in flowers.

Pictorial lifecycle

Monarch male showing its wings to attract a mate	Monarch butterflies mating	Monarch butterfly laying eggs on <a href="#">Asclepias tuberosa</a> x <a href="#">Asclepias incarnata</a> .	Monarch eggs on <a href="#">milkweed</a>
An early <a href="#">instar</a> monarch caterpillar	A late instar caterpillar feeding	A caterpillar beginning pupation	Monarch butterfly chrysalis
Butterfly emerging from chrysalis	Emerged from chrysalis before wings have fully expanded	A Monarch eclosing from a chrysalis	Adult monarch butterfly feeding on a <a href="#">Zinnia</a>
Wintering monarch butterflies			

Host plants

Here is a list of host plants used by the Monarch caterpillar:

- [Asclepias amplexicaulis](#) - Clasping Milkweed
- [Asclepias asperula](#) - Antelope Horns
- [Asclepias californica](#) - California Milkweed
- [Asclepias cordifolia](#) - Heart-leaf Milkweed
- [Asclepias curassavica](#) - Scarlet Milkweed
- [Asclepias curtissii](#) - Curtiss' Milkweed
- [Asclepias eriocarpa](#) - Woollypod Milkweed
- [Asclepias erosa](#) - Desert Milkweed
- [Asclepias exaltata](#) - Poke Milkweed
- [Asclepias fascicularis](#) - Narrow-leaf Milkweed
- [Asclepias humistrata](#) - Sandhill Milkweed
- [Asclepias incarnata](#) - Swamp Milkweed
- [Asclepias nivea](#) - Caribbean Milkweed
- [Asclepias physocarpa](#) - Swan Plant
- [Asclepias purpurascens](#) - Purple Milkweed
- [Asclepias speciosa](#) - Showy Milkweed
- [Asclepias subverticillata](#) - Horsetail Milkweed
- [Asclepias syriaca](#) - Common Milkweed
- [Asclepias tuberosa](#) - Butterfly Weed
- [Asclepias verticillata](#) - Whorled Milkweed
- [Calotropis gigantea](#) - Crown Flower
- [Calotropis procera](#) - Apple of Sodom
- [Cynanchum laeva](#) - Sand Vine
- [Sarcostemma clausa](#) - White Vine<sup>[17][18]</sup>

Defense against predators

Monarchs are foul-tasting and poisonous due to the presence of [cardenolide aglycones](#) in their bodies, which the caterpillars ingest as they feed on milkweed.<sup>[25]</sup> Both forms advertise their unpalatability with bright colors and areas of high contrast on the



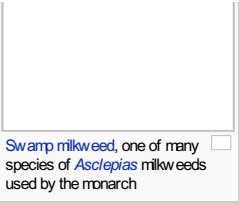
skin or wings. This phenomenon is known as [aposematism](#).

Monarchs also contain [cardiac glycosides](#) in their bodies from the *Asclepias* plants that the caterpillars eat. Overwintering Monarchs in Mexico are often preyed upon by [Black-headed Grosbeaks](#) which are immune to that toxin. Other birds such as [orioles](#) and [jays](#) have learned to eat only the thoracic muscles and abdominal contents because these contain less poison than the rest of the body.<sup>[18]</sup> Some mice are also able to withstand large doses of the poison. Over time, overwintering adults become less poisonous, thus making them more vulnerable to predators. In Mexico, about 14% of the overwintering Monarchs are eaten by birds and mice.<sup>[23]</sup>

Monarchs share this defense with the similar-appearing [viceroy butterfly](#), in an example of [Müllerian mimicry](#). (Viceroy's were at one time believed to be [Batesian](#) mimics of monarchs.)<sup>[*citation needed*]</sup>



The monarch (left) and viceroy (right) butterflies exhibiting Müllerian mimicry



Swamp milkweed, one of many species of *Asclepias* milkweeds used by the monarch

### Relationship with humans

The monarch is the [state insect](#) of [Alabama](#),<sup>[27]</sup> [Idaho](#),<sup>[28]</sup> [Illinois](#),<sup>[29]</sup> [Minnesota](#),<sup>[30]</sup> [Texas](#),<sup>[31]</sup> and the [state butterfly](#) of [Vermont](#)<sup>[32]</sup> and [West Virginia](#).<sup>[33]</sup> It was nominated in 1990 as the national insect of the [United States of America](#), along with the honeybee (*Apis mellifera*),<sup>[34]</sup> but the legislation did not pass.<sup>[35]</sup>

Many people like to attract monarchs by growing a [butterfly garden](#) with a [specific milkweed species](#). Others enjoy raising them for pleasure or for educational purposes. For migrating flocks, sanctuaries have been created at favorite wintering locations.<sup>[36]</sup> Even [tourism](#) revenue is thus generated.

Many schools also enjoy growing, and attending to monarch butterflies, starting with the caterpillar form. When the butterflies reach adulthood they are then released into the wild.<sup>[37]</sup>

Some organizations, such as the [Cape May Bird Observatory](#), have monarch identification tagging programs. Plastic stickers are placed on the wing of the insect with identification information. Tracking information is used to study the migration patterns of monarchs, including how far and where they fly.<sup>[38]</sup>

The main villain on [The Venture Bros.](#) (a cartoon on the [Adult Swim](#) block of [Cartoon Network](#)) takes his name, costume and overall lifestyle from monarch butterflies.



A Monarch male tagged with an identification sticker

### Threats

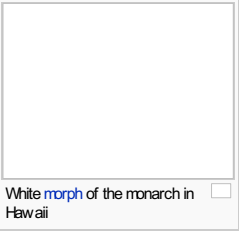
Recent illegal deforestation of the monarch's overwintering grounds have led to a drastic reduction in the butterfly's population. Efforts to classify it as a protected species and to restore its habitat are under way.

### Predators

Although monarchs feed on milkweed, variations in the quantity of cardiac glycosides exist between species, individuals and even parts of the host plant. The levels of toxins in adult monarchs reflect the levels in their host plants. This means some monarchs are not foul-tasting but are [Batesian](#) or [auto-mimics](#). Some species of predators have learned to measure the toxins by taste and reject butterflies with high cardiac glycosides contents, eating only the ones with low cardiac glycosides contents. In the butterfly, the cardiac glycosides are concentrated in the abdomen and wings. Some species of predators differentiate these parts and consume only the most palatable ones.<sup>[39]</sup> Bird predators include [Brown Thrashers](#), [Grackles](#), [Robins](#), [Cardinals](#), [Sparrows](#), [Scrub Jays](#) and [Pinyon Jays](#).<sup>[39]</sup>

In North America, eggs and first instar larvae of the monarch are eaten by larvae and adults of the [introduced](#) Asian lady beetle (*Harmonia axyridis*).<sup>[40]</sup>

On [Oahu](#), a white [morph](#) of the monarch has emerged. This is because of the [introduction](#), in 1965 and 1966, of two [bulbul](#) species, *Pycnonotus cafer* and *Pycnonotus jocosus*. They are now the most common insectivore birds, and probably the only ones preying on insects as big as the monarch. Monarchs in [Hawaii](#) are known to have low cardiac glycoside levels, but the birds may also be [tolerant](#) for the chemical. The two species hunt the larvae and some pupae from the branches and underside of leaves in milkweed bushes. The bulbuls also eat resting and ovipositing adults, but rarely flying ones. Because of its colour the white morph has a higher survival rate than the orange one. This is either because of [apostatic selection](#) (i.e. the birds have learned the orange monarchs can be eaten), because of [camouflage](#) (the white morph matches the white pubescence of milkweed or the patches of light shining through foliage), or because the white morph does not fit the bird's search image of a typical monarch, and is thus avoided.<sup>[41]</sup>



White [morph](#) of the monarch in Hawaii

### Parasites

Parasites include the [tachinid](#) fly *Lesperia archippivora*. Parasitized larvae complete their moult, suspend, but die before pupation. At that time one white [maggot](#) comes out of the larvae, suspended by a [silken](#) thread. The maggot then forms a brown pupa on the ground.<sup>[42]</sup>

The bacteria *Micrococcus flacidifex danai* also infects the larvae and causes "black death". As usual, just before pupation the larvae migrate to a horizontal surface. They die a few hours later, attached only by one pair of prolegs, thorax and abdomen hanging limp. The body turns black shortly after. The bacteria *Pseudomonas aeruginosa* has no invasive powers, but causes [secondary infections](#) in weakened insects. It is a common cause of death in laboratory reared insects.<sup>[42]</sup>

The [protozoan](#) *Ophryocystis elektroschirha* is another parasite of the monarch. It infects the [subcutaneous tissues](#) and propagates by [spores](#) formed during the pupal stage. The spores are found over all of the body of infected butterflies, with the greatest number on the abdomen. These spores are passed, from [female](#) to [caterpillar](#), when spores rub off during egg-laying and are then ingested by caterpillars. Severely infected individuals are weak, unable to expand their wings, or unable to eclose, and have a shortened lifespan but probably occur at low frequencies in nature. This is not the case in laboratory or commercial rearing, where after a few generations all individuals can be infected.<sup>[43]</sup>

### Confusion of host plants

A problem in North America is the [black swallow-wort](#) plant. Monarchs lay their eggs on these plants since they produce stimuli similar to milkweed. Once the eggs hatch, the caterpillars are poisoned by the toxicity of this [invasive plant](#).

### See also

- List of butterflies of Great Britain
- Peninsula Point Light, Michigan

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3. <sup>↑</sup>  *<sup>ⓘ</sup>* *<sup>Ⓐ</sup>* *<sup>Ⓑ</sup>* http://www.amonline.net.au/factsheets/monarch.htm

4. <sup>↑</sup>  *<sup>ⓘ</sup>* *<sup>Ⓐ</sup>* *<sup>Ⓑ</sup>* http://calamvalecreek.ardspace.com/regal.html

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External links

- Monarch entry at Discover Life
- Photos and satellite images of monarch butterfly habitat, from USGS
- Video of a monarch butterfly emerging from chrysalis
- Australian Museum fact sheet on monarch butterflies
- Critters of Calamvale Creek — a monarch tells its story
- Monarch Migration Maps
- Monarch Watch of the University of Kansas Entomology Department
- Michoacan Reforestation Fund
- USGS description of monarch butterfly
- MonarchHealth!
- Monarch Butterfly Trust NZ
- Monarch butterfly life cycle photographs
- More Than Monarchs
- Monarch egg eclosion
- http://www.monarchbutterflyusa.com/
- monarch butterfly on the UF / IFAS Featured Creatures Web site
- PBS NOVA Documentary "The Incredible Journey of the Butterflies"
- Monarch, Canadian Biodiversity Information Facility
- Monarch Watch Reading Room, Articles: The White Monarch
- A route of Monarch Migration on GPSed.com

Categories: Danaus | Butterflies and moths of North America | Butterflies of Ontario | Butterflies of Canada | Pollinators | Fauna of the United States | Fauna of Mexico | Natural history of North America | Lepidoptera of Michigan | Lepidoptera of Maryland | Lepidoptera of Indiana



Wikimedia Commons has media related to: *Danaus plexippus*



Wikispecies has information related to: *Danaus plexippus*



## Old Testament Quotations

### Some Notes on the Apostles' usage of the Septuagint

**Mat. 3:3.** The Hebrew of Isa. 40:3 may be rendered, "The voice of one crying, In the wilderness prepare the way for the Lord." The crier himself is not necessarily in the wilderness: the path is to be prepared in the wilderness. Matthew follows the Septuagint in construing "in the wilderness" with "one crying," and so renders "The voice of one crying in the wilderness, Prepare the way of the Lord." Here the cry comes from one who is himself in the wilderness, that is, from John the Baptist, who habitually preached in the wilderness of Judea.

**Mat. 12:21.** The Hebrew of Isa. 42:4 reads, "and the isles shall have hope in his law." Matthew follows the Septuagint interpretation of this, "and the Gentiles shall have hope in his name."

**Mat. 13: 14-15.** The Hebrew of Isa. 6:9-10 reads, "Hear ye indeed, but understand not; and see ye indeed, but perceive not. Make the heart of this people fat, and make their ears heavy, and shut their eyes; lest they see..." Matthew follows the Septuagint in changing the first sentence from two commands to the people into a prophetic description of the people, "Ye shall surely hear, but shall not understand; ye shall surely see, but shall not perceive." He also follows the Septuagint in changing the second sentence from two commands to the prophet into a description of the present condition of the people: "This people's heart has become gross, and their ears are dull of hearing, and their eyes they have closed; lest they see..."

**Mat. 15:8-9.** The Hebrew of Isa. 29:13 reads (somewhat obscurely), "their worship of me is but a commandment of men which hath been taught them." The phrase, "but in vain do they worship me," in which Matthew follows the Septuagint, was created by the translator of the Septuagint by separating "their worship of me" from the words that follow and supplying the thought "is in vain" to complete the sense, and then construing the rest of the sentence adverbially, "teaching the precepts and doctrines of men." The sense of the passage is not materially changed in this.

**Mat. 21:16.** The Hebrew of Psalms 8:2 reads, "out of the mouth of babes and sucklings thou hast established strength." Matthew follows the Septuagint with "thou hast prepared praise."

**Mark 1:2.** See remarks on Mat. 3:3 above.

**Mark 4:12.** See remarks on Mat. 13:14-15 above. Mark departs from both the Hebrew and Septuagint with the interpretation, "and it should be forgiven them," instead of "and I should heal them" (Septuagint) or "and be healed" (Hebrew).

**Mark 7:6-7.** See remarks on Mat. 15:8-9 above.

**Luke 3:4.** See remarks on Mat. 3:3 above.

**Luke 3:5-6.** The Hebrew of Isa. 40:4-5 reads "every valley shall be exalted...all flesh shall see it [i.e., the glory of the Lord] together." Luke follows the Septuagint with "every valley shall be filled...all flesh shall see the salvation of God."

**Luke 4:18.** The Hebrew of Isa. 61:2 reads merely "the opening to them that are bound," which may mean the opening of prisons. Luke follows the Septuagint interpretation, "the recovering of sight to the blind," in which the "opening" is of blind eyes, but adds "to set at liberty the afflicted" as an alternative interpretation of the Hebrew. The phrase "to bind up the broken-hearted" (Septuagint "to heal the broken-hearted") has been left out of the quotation.

**Luke 8:10.** The allusion to Isa. 6:9 conforms to the Septuagint. See remarks on Mat. 13:14-15 above.

**John 1:23.** See remarks on Mat. 3:3 above. John's quotation is somewhat looser.

**John 12:34.** There is a verbal correspondence here to the Septuagint of Psalms 89:36, "his [David's] seed shall abide forever."

**John 12:38.** "Lord" at the beginning of the quotation is not in the Hebrew, but in the Septuagint.

**John 12:40.** See remarks on Mat. 13:14-15 and Mark 4:12 above. John is quoting the Septuagint loosely, with reference to the Hebrew.

**Acts 2:19-20.** The Hebrew of Joel 2:30-31 has "pillars of smoke" and "terrible day." Luke follows the Septuagint with "vapour of smoke" and "glorious day."

**Acts 2:26.** The Hebrew of Psalms 16:9 has "my glory rejoiceth." Luke follows the Septuagint with "my tongue rejoiced."

**Acts 2:28.** The Hebrew of Psalms 16:11 has "in thy presence is fulness of joy; in thy right hand there are pleasures for evermore." Luke follows the Septuagint in paraphrasing the first clause "Thou shalt make me full of gladness with thy countenance," and in dropping the last clause.

**Acts 4:26.** The Hebrew of Psalms 2:2 reads, "the rulers take counsel together." Luke follows the Septuagint, "the rulers were gathered together."

**Acts 7:14.** The Hebrew of Gen. 46:27 and Exod. 1:5 has "seventy." Luke follows the Septuagint with "seventy-five."

**Acts 7:43.** The Hebrew of Amos 5:26 is difficult. It seems to say, "ye took up the tabernacle of Moloch and Chiun your images, the star of your god, which ye made." Luke follows the Septuagint interpretation with "ye took up the tabernacle of Moloch and the star of the god Rephan, the figures which ye made."

**Acts 8:33.** The Hebrew of Isa. 53:8 reads "he was taken away by distress and judgment." Luke follows the Septuagint with "in his humiliation his judgment was taken away."

**Acts 13:34.** The Hebrew of Isa. 55:3 has "the sure mercies of David." Luke follows the Septuagint with "the holy and sure things of David."

**Acts 13:41.** The Hebrew of Habakkuk 1:5 reads, "Behold, ye among the nations, and look, and wonder exceedingly." The Septuagint has "Behold, ye despisers, and look, and wonder exceedingly, and perish," which Luke largely follows.

**Acts 15:17.** The Hebrew of Amos 9:12 reads "that they may possess the remnant of Edom, and all the nations upon whom my name is called." The Septuagint has "that the remnant of men and all the nations upon whom my name is called may seek after [me]," which Luke largely follows.

**Acts 28:26-27.** See remarks on Mat. 13:14-15 and Mark 4:12 above. Here Luke follows the Septuagint exactly.



**Rom. 2:24.** The Hebrew of Isa. 52:5 reads merely, "my name continually every day is blasphemed." The Septuagint has "because of you my name is continually blasphemed among the Gentiles," which Paul follows.

**Rom 3:4.** The Hebrew of Psa. 51:4 reads "and blameless when thou judgest." Paul follows the Septuagint with "and prevail when thou dost enter into judgment."

**Rom. 3:12.** The Hebrew of Psa. 14:3 reads, "they are together become filthy." Paul follows the Septuagint with "they are together become unprofitable."

**Rom 3:14.** The Hebrew of Psa. 10:7 reads, "his mouth is full of cursing and deceit." Paul follows the Septuagint with "whose mouth is full of cursing and bitterness."

**Rom 9:28.** The Hebrew of Isa. 10:22-23 is difficult. It seems to say, "a destruction is decreed, overflowing with righteousness. For a completion, one that is decreed, shall the Lord Jehovah of Hosts make in the midst of all the earth." The Septuagint abbreviates with "He will finish the work, and cut it short in righteousness; because the Lord will make a short work in all the earth," which is followed by Paul.

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## Quotations of and Allusions to the Old Testament In the New Testament

**Compiled and annotated by Michael D. Marlowe**

### PLEASE NOTE:

- The New Testament text referred to is that of the United Bible Societies, third edition.
- Paraphrastic and composite quotations are indicated by *italic* type.
- Noteworthy correspondences with the Septuagint version are indicated by ***bold italic*** type.
- Allusions are indicated by a question mark. Only the clearest allusions are listed here.
- Secondary or minor phrase-length parallels are given in parentheses.
- Go to the [index](#) to see references (without annotation) in Old Testament order

Mat 1:23	<b><i>Isa 7:14</i></b>
Mat 2:6	Micah 5:2
"	(2 Sam 5:2)
Mat 2:15	Hosea 11:1
Mat 2:18	Jer 31:15
Mat 2:23	Judg 13:5?
"	Isa 11:1?
Mat 3:3	<b><i>Isa 40:3</i></b>
Mat 3:17	Gen 22:2?
"	Psa 2:7?
"	Isa 42:1?
Mat 4:4	Deut 8:3
Mat 4:6	Psa 91:11
"	Psa 91:12
Mat 4:7	Deut 6:16
Mat 4:10	Deut 6:13
Mat 4:15	Isa 9:1
Mat 4:16	Isa 9:2
Mat 5:5	Psa 37:11?
Mat 5:21	Exod 20:13
"	(Deut 5:17)
Mat 5:27	Exod 20:14
"	(Deut 5:18)
Mat 5:31	<i>Deut 24:1</i>
Mat 5:33	<i>Lev 19:12</i>
"	<i>Num 30:2</i>
Mat 5:34	Isa 66:1?
Mat 5:35	Psa 48:2?
"	Isa 66:1?
Mat 5:38	Exod 21:24
"	(Lev 24:20)



" (Deut 19:21)

Mat 5:43 Lev 19:18

Mat 7:23 Psa 6:8?

Mat 8:17 Isa 53:4

Mat 9:13 Hosea 6:6

Mat 10:35 Micah 7:6?

Mat 10:36 Micah 7:6?

Mat 11:5 Isa 61:1?

Mat 11:10 Mal 3:1

" (Exod 23:20)

Mat 11:23 Isa 14:13?

" Isa 14:15?

Mat 11:29 Jer 6:16?

Mat 12:7 Hosea 6:6

Mat 12:18 Isa 42:1

Mat 12:19 Isa 42:2

Mat 12:20 Isa 42:3

Mat 12:21 **Isa 42:4**

Mat 12:40 Jonah 1:17?

Mat 13:14 **Isa 6:9**

Mat 13:15 **Isa 6:10**

Mat 13:35 Psa 78:2

Mat 15:4 Exod 20:12

" **Exod 21:17**

" (Deut 5:16)

Mat 15:8 **Isa 29:13**

Mat 15:9 **Isa 29:13**

Mat 16:27 Psa 62:12?

" (Prov 24:12)

Mat 17:5 Gen 22:2?

" Deut 18:15?

" Psa 2:7?

" Isa 42:1?

Mat 18:16 Deut 19:15?

Mat 19:4 **Gen 1:27**

" (Gen 5:2)

Mat 19:5 Gen 2:24

Mat 19:7 **Deut 24:1**

Mat 19:18 Exod 20:13

" Exod 20:14

" Exod 20:15

" Exod 20:16

" (Deut 5:17)

" (Deut 5:18)

" (Deut 5:19)

" (Deut 5:20)

Mat 19:19 Exod 20:12

" Lev 19:18

" Deut 5:16?

Mat 21:5 Isa 62:11

" Zec 9:9

Mat 21:9 Psa 118:25?

" Psa 118:26?

Mat 21:13 Isa 56:7

" Jer 7:11?

Mat 21:16 **Psa 8:2**



Mat 21:33 Isa 5:1?  
 Mat 21:33 Isa 5:2?  
 Mat 21:42 Psa 118:22  
 " Psa 118:23  
 Mat 22:24 *Deut 25:5*  
 " (Gen 38:8)  
 Mat 22:32 Exod 3:6  
 " (Exod 3:15)  
 Mat 22:37 Deut 6:5  
 Mat 22:39 Lev 19:18  
 Mat 22:44 Psa 110:1  
 " (Psa 8:6)  
 Mat 23:38 Jer 22:5?  
 Mat 23:39 Psa 118:26?  
 Mat 24:15 Dan 11:31?  
 " (Dan 12:11)  
 Mat 24:30 Dan 7:13?  
 Mat 26:15 Zec 11:12?  
 " Zec 11:13?  
 Mat 26:31 Zec 13:7  
 Mat 26:64 Psa 110:1?  
 " Dan 7:13?  
 Mat 27:9 Zec 11:12  
 Mat 27:10 Zec 11:13  
 Mat 27:35 Psa 22:18?  
 Mat 27:46 Psa 22:1  
 Mat 27:48 Psa 69:21?  
 Mark 1:2 ***Isa 40:3***  
 " Mal 3:1  
 " (Exod 23:20)  
 Mark 1:11 Gen 22:2?  
 " Psa 2:7?  
 " Isa 42:1?  
 Mark 4:12 ***Isa 6:9***  
 " ***Isa 6:10***  
 Mark 4:29 Joel 3:13?  
 Mark 6:34 Num 27:17?  
 " (1 Ki 22:17)  
 " (Ezek 34:5)  
 Mark 7:6 ***Isa 29:13***  
 Mark 7:7 ***Isa 29:13***  
 Mark 7:10 Exod 20:12  
 " Exod 21:17  
 " (Deut 5:16)  
 Mark 8:18 Jer 5:21?  
 Mark 8:18 (Ezek 12:2)  
 Mark 9:7 Gen 22:2?  
 " Deut 18:15?  
 " Psa 2:7?  
 Mark 9:48 Isa 66:24?  
 Mark 10:4 *Deut 24:1*  
 Mark 10:6 *Gen 1:27*  
 " (Gen 5:2)  
 Mark 10:7 Gen 2:24  
 Mark 10:19 Exod 20:12  
 " Exod 20:13



" Exod 20:14  
 " Exod 20:15  
 " Exod 20:16  
 Mark 11:9 Psa 118:25?  
 Mark 11:10 Psa 118:26?  
 Mark 11:17 Isa 56:7  
 " Jer 7:11?  
 Mark 12:1 Isa 5:1?  
 " Isa 5:2?  
 Mark 12:10 Psa 118:22  
 Mark 12:11 Psa 118:23  
 Mark 12:19 *Deut 25:5*  
 " (Gen 38:8)  
 Mark 12:26 Exod 3:6  
 " (Exod 3:15)  
 Mark 12:29 Deut 6:4  
 Mark 12:30 Deut 6:5  
 Mark 12:31 Lev 19:18  
 Mark 12:32 *Deut 4:35*  
 Mark 12:33 *Lev 19:18*  
 " *Deut 6:5*  
 Mark 12:36 Psa 110:1  
 Mark 13:14 Dan 11:31?  
 " (Dan 12:11)  
 Mark 13:26 Dan 7:13?  
 Mark 14:27 Zec 13:7  
 Mark 14:62 Psa 110:1?  
 " Dan 7:13?  
 Mark 15:24 Psa 22:18?  
 Mark 15:34 Psa 22:1  
 Mark 15:36 Psa 69:21?  
 Mark 16:19 Psa 110:1?  
 Luke 1:17 Mal 4:5?  
 " Mal 4:6?  
 Luke 1:48 1 Sam 1:11?  
 Luke 1:50 Psa 103:17?  
 Luke 1:76 Mal 3:1?  
 Luke 1:79 Isa 9:2?  
 Luke 2:23 *Exod 13:2*  
 " (Exod 13:12)  
 " (Exod 13:15)  
 Luke 2:24 Lev 12:8  
 Luke 2:52 1 Sam 2:26?  
 Luke 3:4 ***Isa 40:3***  
 Luke 3:5 ***Isa 40:4***  
 Luke 3:6 ***Isa 40:5***  
 Luke 3:10 Mal 3:7  
 Luke 3:22 Gen 22:2?  
 " Psa 2:7?  
 " Isa 42:1?  
 Luke 4:4 Deut 8:3  
 Luke 4:8 Deut 6:13  
 Luke 4:10 Psa 91:11  
 Luke 4:11 Psa 91:12  
 Luke 4:12 Deut 6:16  
 Luke 4:18 ***Isa 61:1***



" (Isa 58:6)

Luke 4:19 **Isa 61:2**

Luke 7:22 Isa 35:5?

" Isa 35:6?

" Isa 61:1?

Luke 7:27 Mal 3:1

" (Exod 23:20)

Luke 8:10 **Isa 6:9?**

Luke 9:35 Deut 18:15?

" Psa 2:7?

" Isa 42:1?

Luke 9:54 2 Ki 1:10?

" (2 Ki 1:12)

Luke 10:15 Isa 14:13?

" Isa 14:15?

Luke 10:27 Lev 19:18

" Deut 6:5

Luke 12:53 Micah 7:6?

Luke 13:27 Psa 6:8?

Luke 13:35 Psa 118:26?

" Jer 22:5?

Luke 18:20 Exod 20:12

" Exod 20:13

" Exod 20:14

" Exod 20:15

" Exod 20:16

" (Deut 5:16)

" (Deut 5:17)

" (Deut 5:18)

" (Deut 5:19)

" (Deut 5:20)

Luke 19:38 Psa 118:26?

Luke 19:46 Isa 56:7

" Jer 7:11?

Luke 20:9 Isa 5:1?

Luke 20:17 Psa 118:22

Luke 20:28 *Deut 25:5*

" (Gen 38:8)

Luke 20:37 *Exod 3:6*

" (Exod 3:15)

Luke 20:42 *Psa 110:1*

Luke 20:43 Psa 110:1

Luke 21:27 Dan 7:13?

Luke 21:35 Isa 24:17?

Luke 22:37 Isa 53:12

Luke 22:69 Psa 110:1?

Luke 23:30 Hosea 10:8?

Luke 23:34 Psa 22:18?

Luke 23:46 Psa 31:5?

Luke 24:46 Isaiah 53?

" Hosea 6:2?

" Psa 16:8-11?

John 1:14 Gen 22:2

John 1:23 **Isa 40:3**

John 1:51 Gen 28:12?

John 2:17 Psa 69:9



John 6:31 Exod 16:4?  
 " *Psa 78:24*  
 John 6:45 Isa 54:13  
 " (Jer 31:33)  
 " (Jer 31:34)  
 John 7:38 Prov 18:4?  
 John 7:42 Micah 5:2?  
 " (2 Sam 7:12)  
 John 10:34 Psa 82:6  
 John 12:13 Psa 118:25?  
 John 12:15 Isa 40:9  
 " Zec 9:9  
 John 12:34 ***Psa 89:36?***  
 John 12:38 ***Isa 53:1***  
 John 12:40 ***Isa 6:10***  
 John 13:18 Psa 41:9  
 John 15:25 Psa 69:4  
 " (Psa 35:19)  
 John 19:24 Psa 22:18  
 John 19:28 Psa 69:21?  
 John 19:29 Psa 69:21?  
 John 19:36 Exod 12:46  
 " (Num 9:12)  
 " (Psa 34:20)  
 John 19:37 Zec 12:10  
 Acts 1:20 Psa 69:25  
 " Psa 109:8  
 Acts 2:17 ***Joel 2:28***  
 Acts 2:18 ***Joel 2:29***  
 Acts 2:19 ***Joel 2:30***  
 Acts 2:20 ***Joel 2:31***  
 Acts 2:21 ***Joel 2:31***  
 Acts 2:25 ***Psa 16:8***  
 Acts 2:26 ***Psa 16:9***  
 Acts 2:27 ***Psa 16:10***  
 Acts 2:28 ***Psa 16:11***  
 Acts 2:30 (2 Sam 7:12)  
 " (Psa 89:3)  
 " (Psa 89:4)  
 Acts 2:30 *Psa 132:11*  
 Acts 2:31 *Psa 16:10*  
 Acts 2:34 Psa 110:1  
 Acts 2:35 Psa 110:1  
 Acts 3:13 Exod 3:15?  
 " (Exod 3:6)  
 Acts 3:22 *Deut 18:15*  
 " *Lev 23:29*  
 Acts 3:23 Deut 18:19  
 Acts 3:25 Gen 22:18  
 " (Gen 12:3)  
 " (Gen 26:4)  
 " (Gen 28:14)  
 Acts 4:11 Psa 118:22  
 Acts 4:24 Exod 20:11?  
 " (Psa 146:6)  
 Acts 4:25 ***Psa 2:1***



Acts 4:26 **Psa 2:2**  
 Acts 7:3 Gen 12:1  
 Acts 7:5 Gen 13:15?  
 " Gen 17:8?  
 Acts 7:6 Gen 15:13?  
 Acts 7:7 *Gen 15:14*  
 " *Exod 3:12*  
 Acts 7:14 **Gen 46:27?**  
 " (**Exod 1:5**)  
 Acts 7:18 Exod 1:8  
 Acts 7:27 *Exod 2:13*  
 Acts 7:28 *Exod 2:14*  
 Acts 7:29 *Exod 2:15*  
 Acts 7:32 Exod 3:6  
 " (Exod 3:15)  
 Acts 7:33 *Exod 3:5*  
 Acts 7:34 *Exod 3:7*  
 " *Exod 3:8*  
 " *Exod 3:10*  
 " (Exod 2:24)  
 Acts 7:37 Deut 18:15  
 Acts 7:40 Exod 32:1  
 " (Exod 32:23)  
 Acts 7:42 Amos 5:25  
 Acts 7:43 **Amos 5:26**  
 " *Amos 5:27*  
 Acts 7:49 Isa 66:1  
 Acts 7:50 Isa 66:2  
 Acts 8:32 **Isa 53:7**  
 Acts 8:33 **Isa 53:8**  
 Acts 13:18 Deut 1:31?  
 Acts 13:19 *Deut 7:1*  
 Acts 13:22 *1 Sam 13:14*  
 " *Psa 89:20*  
 " (*Isa 44:28*)  
 Acts 13:33 Psa 2:7  
 Acts 13:34 **Isa 55:3**  
 Acts 13:35 Psa 16:10  
 Acts 13:36 *1 Ki 2:10*  
 Acts 13:41 **Hab 1:5**  
 Acts 13:47 Isa 49:6  
 Acts 14:15 Exod 20:11?  
 " (Psa 146:6)  
 Acts 15:16 **Amos 9:11**  
 Acts 15:17 **Amos 9:12**  
 " (Isa 45:21)  
 Acts 15:18 (Isa 45:21)  
 Acts 17:31 Psa 9:8?  
 " (Psa 96:13)  
 " (Psa 98:9)  
 Acts 23:5 Exod 22:28  
 Acts 28:26 **Isa 6:9**  
 Acts 28:27 **Isa 6:10**  
 Acts 28:28 Psa 67:2?  
 Rom 1:17 Hab 2:4  
 Rom 1:23 Gen 1:26



" Psa 106:20  
 Rom 2:6 Psa 62:12?  
 " (Prov 24:12)  
 Rom 2:24 **Isa 52:5**  
 Rom 3:4 **Psa 51:4**  
 Rom 3:10 Psa 14:1  
 " Eccl 7:20  
 Rom 3:11 Psa 14:2  
 Rom 3:12 **Psa 14:3**  
 Rom 3:13 **Psa 5:9**  
 " **Psa 140:3**  
 Rom 3:14 **Psa 10:7**  
 Rom 3:15 Isa 59:7  
 Rom 3:16 Isa 59:7  
 Rom 3:17 Isa 59:8  
 Rom 3:18 Psa 36:1  
 Rom 3:20 Psa 143:2?  
 Rom 4:3 Gen 15:6  
 Rom 4:7 Psa 32:1  
 Rom 4:8 Psa 32:2  
 Rom 4:9 Gen 15:6  
 Rom 4:17 Gen 17:5  
 Rom 4:18 Gen 15:5  
 Rom 4:22 Gen 15:6?  
 Rom 7:7 Exod 20:17  
 " (Deut 5:21)  
 Rom 8:36 Psa 44:22  
 Rom 9:7 Gen 21:12  
 Rom 9:9 Gen 18:10  
 Rom 9:12 Gen 25:23  
 Rom 9:13 Mal 1:2  
 " Mal 1:3  
 Rom 9:15 Exod 33:19  
 Rom 9:17 Exod 9:16  
 Rom 9:20 Isa 29:16?  
 Rom 9:20 (Isa 45:9)  
 Rom 9:21 Jer 18:6?  
 Rom 9:25 Hosea 2:23  
 Rom 9:26 Hosea 1:10  
 Rom 9:27 **Isa 10:22**  
 " (Hosea 1:10)  
 Rom 9:28 **Isa 10:23**  
 Rom 9:29 **Isa 1:9**  
 Rom 9:33 **Isa 8:14**  
 " **Isa 28:16**  
 Rom 10:5 **Lev 18:5**  
 Rom 10:6 **Deut 9:4**  
 " **Deut 30:12**  
 Rom 10:7 **Deut 30:13**  
 Rom 10:8 **Deut 30:14**  
 Rom 10:11 **Isa 28:16**  
 Rom 10:13 Joel 2:31  
 Rom 10:15 Isa 52:7  
 " (Nahum 1:15)  
 Rom 10:16 **Isa 53:1**  
 Rom 10:18 **Psa 19:4**



Rom 10:19 Deut 32:21  
Rom 10:20 **Isa 65:1**  
Rom 10:21 **Isa 65:2**  
Rom 11:2 Psa 94:14?  
" (1 Sam 12:22)  
Rom 11:3 1 Ki 19:10  
Rom 11:4 1 Ki 19:18  
Rom 11:8 Deut 29:4  
" Isa 29:10  
Rom 11:9 **Psa 69:22**  
Rom 11:10 **Psa 69:23**  
Rom 11:26 **Isa 59:20**  
Rom 11:27 **Isa 27:9**  
" **Isa 59:21**  
" (Jer 31:33)  
" (Jer 31:34)  
Rom 11:34 **Isa 40:13**  
Rom 11:35 Job 41:11  
Rom 12:17 **Prov 3:4**  
Rom 12:19 Deut 32:35  
Rom 12:20 **Prov 25:21**  
" **Prov 25:22**  
Rom 13:9 Exod 20:13  
" Exod 20:14  
" Exod 20:15  
" Exod 20:17  
" Lev 19:18  
" (Deut 5:17)  
" (Deut 5:18)  
" (Deut 5:19)  
" (Deut 5:21)  
Rom 14:11 **Isa 45:23**  
Rom 14:11 Isa 49:18  
Rom 15:3 Psa 69:9  
Rom 15:9 Psa 18:49  
" (2 Sam 22:50)  
Rom 15:10 **Deut 32:43**  
Rom 15:11 Psa 117:1  
Rom 15:12 **Isa 11:10**  
Rom 15:21 **Isa 52:15**  
1 Cor 1:19 **Isa 29:14**  
1 Cor 1:31 Jer 9:24  
1 Cor 2:9 Isa 64:4  
" (Isa 52:15)  
" (**Jer 3:16**)  
1 Cor 2:16 **Isa 40:13**  
1 Cor 3:19 Job 5:13  
1 Cor 3:20 Psa 94:11  
1 Cor 5:13 **Deut 17:7**  
1 Cor 6:16 Gen 2:24  
1 Cor 6:17 Gen 2:24  
1 Cor 9:9 Deut 25:4  
1 Cor 10:5 Num 14:16?  
1 Cor 10:7 Exod 32:6  
1 Cor 10:20 Deut 32:17?  
1 Cor 10:22 Deut 32:21?



1 Cor 10:26 Psa 24:1  
1 Cor 11:7 Gen 1:26  
1 Cor 14:21 Isa 28:11  
" Isa 28:12  
1 Cor 15:25 Psa 110:1?  
1 Cor 15:27 Psa 8:6  
1 Cor 15:32 Isa 22:13  
1 Cor 15:45 Gen 2:7  
1 Cor 15:47 Gen 2:7?  
1 Cor 15:49 Gen 1:26  
1 Cor 15:54 Isa 25:8  
1 Cor 15:55 **Hosea 13:14**  
2 Cor 3:7 Exod 34:34?  
2 Cor 3:13 Exod 34:35?  
2 Cor 3:16 Exod 34:34?  
2 Cor 3:18 Gen 1:26  
2 Cor 4:4 Gen 1:26  
2 Cor 4:13 **Psa 116:10**  
2 Cor 6:2 Isa 49:8  
2 Cor 6:16 Lev 26:12  
" Ezek 37:27  
2 Cor 6:17 **Isa 52:11**  
" **Ezek 20:34**  
" (Jer 51:45)  
2 Cor 6:18 2 Sam 7:8  
" 2 Sam 7:14  
" (Isa 43:6)  
2 Cor 8:15 Exod 16:18  
2 Cor 8:21 **Prov 3:4**  
2 Cor 9:7 **Prov 22:8?**  
2 Cor 9:9 Psa 112:9  
2 Cor 10:17 Jer 9:24  
2 Cor 13:1 Deut 19:15?  
Gal 1:15 **Isa 49:1?**  
" (Jer 1:5)  
Gal 2:16 Psa 143:2?  
Gal 3:6 Gen 15:6  
Gal 3:8 Gen 12:3  
Gal 3:10 **Deut 27:26**  
Gal 3:11 Hab 2:4  
Gal 3:12 Lev 18:5  
Gal 3:13 Deut 21:23  
Gal 3:16 Gen 13:15  
" (Gen 17:7)  
Gal 4:27 Isa 54:1  
Gal 4:30 Gen 21:10  
Gal 5:14 Lev 19:18  
Eph 1:20 Psa 110:1?  
Eph 1:22 Psa 8:6?  
Eph 2:17 Isa 57:19?  
Eph 4:8 Psa 68:18  
Eph 4:25 Zec 8:16?  
Eph 4:26 **Psa 4:4?**  
Eph 5:18 **Prov 23:31?**  
Eph 5:31 Gen 2:24  
Eph 6:2 Deut 5:16



"	(Exod 20:12)
Eph 6:3	Deut 5:16
"	(Exod 20:12)
Eph 6:14	Isa 11:5?
"	Isa 59:17?
Eph 6:15	Isa 52:7?
Eph 6:17	Isa 11:4?
"	Isa 49:2?
"	Isa 59:17?
"	Hosea 6:5?
Phil 1:19	<b>Job 13:16?</b>
Phil 2:10	<b>Isa 45:23?</b>
Phil 2:11	<b>Isa 45:23?</b>
Col 2:22	Isa 29:13?
Col 3:1	Psa 110:1?
Col 3:10	Gen 1:26?
1 Th 5:8	Isa 59:17?
2 Th 1:8	Isa 66:15?
"	Jer 10:25?
"	(Psa 79:6)
2 Th 1:9	<b>Isa 2:19?</b>
2 Th 2:4	Ezek 28:2?
"	Dan 11:36?
2 Th 2:8	Isa 11:4?
1 Tim 5:18	Deut 25:4
1 Tim 5:19	Deut 19:15?
2 Tim 2:19	<b>Num 16:5?</b>
2 Tim 4:14	Psa 62:12?
2 Tim 4:14	(Prov 24:12)
Titus 2:14	Deut 14:2?
"	Psa 130:8?
"	Ezek 37:23?
Heb 1:3	Psa 110:1?
Heb 1:5	2 Sam 7:14
"	Psa 2:7
Heb 1:6	<b>Deut 32:43</b>
"	(Psa 97:7)
Heb 1:7	<b>Psa 104:4</b>
Heb 1:8	Psa 45:6
Heb 1:9	Psa 45:7
Heb 1:10	<b>Psa 102:25</b>
Heb 1:11	<b>Psa 102:26</b>
Heb 1:12	<b>Psa 102:27</b>
Heb 1:13	Psa 110:1
Heb 2:6	<b>Psa 8:4</b>
Heb 2:7	<b>Psa 8:5</b>
Heb 2:8	<b>Psa 8:6</b>
Heb 2:12	Psa 22:22
Heb 2:13	<b>Isa 8:17</b>
"	Isa 8:18
"	<b>(2 Sam 22:3)</b>
Heb 2:16	Isa 41:8?
"	Isa 41:9?
Heb 3:2	Num 12:7?
Heb 3:5	Num 12:7?
Heb 3:7	Psa 95:7



Heb 3:8 Psa 95:8  
 Heb 3:9 Psa 95:9  
 Heb 3:10 Psa 95:10  
 Heb 3:11 Psa 95:11  
 Heb 3:15 **Psa 95:7**  
 " **Psa 95:8**  
 Heb 3:18 Psa 95:11?  
 Heb 4:3 Psa 95:11  
 Heb 4:4 Gen 2:2  
 Heb 4:5 Psa 95:11  
 Heb 4:7 **Psa 95:7**  
 " **Psa 95:8**  
 Heb 4:10 Gen 2:2?  
 " Psa 95:11?  
 Heb 5:5 Psa 2:7  
 Heb 5:6 Psa 110:4  
 Heb 6:8 Gen 3:18?  
 Heb 6:13 Gen 22:16  
 Heb 6:14 Gen 22:17  
 Heb 6:19 Lev 16:12?  
 Heb 7:1 *Gen 14:17*  
 Heb 7:17 Psa 110:4  
 Heb 7:21 Psa 110:4  
 Heb 8:1 Psa 110:1?  
 Heb 8:5 Exod 25:40  
 Heb 8:8 Jer 31:31  
 Heb 8:9 Jer 31:32  
 Heb 8:10 Jer 31:33  
 Heb 8:11 Jer 31:34  
 Heb 8:12 Jer 31:34  
 Heb 9:20 Exod 24:8  
 Heb 9:28 Isa 53:12?  
 Heb 10:5 Psa 40:6  
 Heb 10:6 Psa 40:6  
 Heb 10:7 Psa 40:7  
 " Psa 40:8  
 Heb 10:12 Psa 110:1?  
 Heb 10:13 Psa 110:1?  
 Heb 10:16 Jer 31:33  
 Heb 10:17 Jer 31:34  
 Heb 10:27 **Isa 26:11?**  
 Heb 10:28 Deut 17:6?  
 Heb 10:30 Deut 32:35  
 " Deut 32:36  
 Heb 10:37 **Hab 2:3**  
 " (**Isa 26:20**)  
 Heb 10:38 **Hab 2:4**  
 Heb 11:5 **Gen 5:24**  
 Heb 11:12 Gen 22:17?  
 Heb 11:18 Gen 21:12  
 Heb 11:21 **Gen 47:31**  
 Heb 12:2 Psa 110:1?  
 Heb 12:5 **Prov 3:11**  
 Heb 12:6 **Prov 3:12**  
 Heb 12:12 Isa 35:3?  
 Heb 12:13 **Prov 4:26?**



Heb 12:15 Deut 29:18?  
Heb 12:20 *Exod 19:13*  
Heb 12:21 Deut 9:19  
Heb 12:26 **Hag 2:6**  
Heb 12:29 Deut 4:24?  
Heb 13:5 Deut 31:6  
Heb 13:5 (Josh 1:5)  
Heb 13:6 **Psa 118:6**  
Heb 13:11 Lev 16:27?  
James 1:10 Isa 40:6?  
James 1:11 Isa 40:7?  
James 2:8 Lev 19:18  
James 2:11 Exod 20:13  
" Exod 20:14  
" (Deut 5:17)  
" (Deut 5:18)  
James 2:21 Gen 22:9?  
James 2:23 Gen 15:6  
" Isa 41:8?  
James 3:9 Gen 1:26?  
" (Gen 5:2)  
" (Gen 9:6)  
James 4:6 **Prov 3:34**  
James 5:4 Isa 5:9?  
" (Deut 24:15)  
James 5:11 Psa 103:8?  
1 Pet 1:16 Lev 19:2  
1 Pet 1:24 Isa 40:6  
" Isa 40:8  
1 Pet 1:25 Isa 40:8  
1 Pet 2:3 Psa 34:8?  
1 Pet 2:6 **Isa 28:16**  
1 Pet 2:7 Psa 118:22  
1 Pet 2:8 Isa 8:14  
1 Pet 2:9 **Exod 23:22?**  
" **Isa 43:21?**  
" (**Exod 19:6**)  
1 Pet 2:10 Hosea 2:23?  
1 Pet 2:22 Isa 53:9?  
1 Pet 2:24 Isa 53:4?  
" Isa 53:5?  
1 Pet 2:25 Isa 53:6?  
1 Pet 3:6 Gen 18:12?  
1 Pet 3:10 Psa 34:12  
" Psa 34:13  
1 Pet 3:11 Psa 34:14  
1 Pet 3:12 Psa 34:15  
" Psa 34:16  
1 Pet 3:14 Isa 8:12?  
1 Pet 3:15 Isa 8:13?  
1 Pet 4:8 Prov 10:12?  
1 Pet 4:14 Isa 11:2?  
1 Pet 4:18 **Prov 11:31**  
1 Pet 5:5 **Prov 3:34**  
1 Pet 5:7 Psa 55:22?  
2 Pet 1:17 Gen 22:2?



" Psa 2:7?  
" Isa 42:1?  
2 Pet 2:22 Prov 26:11  
2 Pet 3:8 Psa 90:4?  
2 Pet 3:13 Isa 65:17?  
Jude 1:9 Zec 3:2?  
Rev 1:7 Dan 7:13?  
" Zec 12:10?  
Rev 2:26 Psa 2:8?  
Rev 2:27 Psa 2:9?  
Rev 3:7 Isa 22:22?  
Rev 3:19 Prov 3:12?  
Rev 4:8 Isa 6:3?  
Rev 6:16 Hosea 10:8?  
Rev 9:20 Dan 5:23?  
Rev 10:6 Exod 20:11?  
" (Psa 146:6)  
Rev 13:7 Dan 7:21?  
Rev 14:7 Exod 20:11?  
" (Psa 146:6)

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[Bible Research](#) > [Ancient Versions](#) > [Septuagint](#) > [Apostolic Use](#)







Alexandria, and Jerome.

From about 395 to 403 Origen became the subject of heated debate throughout Christendom. These three ecclesiats applied much energy and thought in search of questionable doctrine in Origen. Again the controversy flared up around 535, and in the wake of this the Emperor Justinian composed a tract against Origen in 543, proposing nine anathemas against "On First Principles", Origen's chief theological work. Origen was finally officially condemned in the Second Council of Constantinople in 553, when fifteen anathemas were charged against him.

The critics of Origen attacked him on individual points, and thus did not create a systematic theology to oppose him. Nonetheless, one can glean from their writings five major points that Christianity has raised against reincarnation:

(1) It seems to minimize Christian salvation. (2) It is in conflict with the resurrection of the body. (3) It creates an unnatural separation between body and soul. (4) It is built on a much too speculative use of Christian scriptures. (5) There is no recollection of previous lives.

Eusebius reported that Origen, following [Matthew 19:12](#) literally, castrated himself.<sup>[9]</sup> This story was accepted during the Middle Ages and was cited by [Abelard](#) in his 12th century letters to Heloise.<sup>[10]</sup> Scholars within the past century have questioned this, surmising that this may have been a rumor circulated by his detractors.<sup>[11]</sup> The 1903 Catholic Encyclopedia does not report this.<sup>[12]</sup> However, renowned historian of late antiquity Peter Brown finds no reason to deny the truth of Eusebius' claims.

During the reign of emperor [Caracalla](#), about 211-212, Origen paid a brief visit to [Rome](#), but the relative laxity during the pontificate of [Zephyrinus](#) seems to have disillusioned him, and on his return to Alexandria he resumed his teaching with zeal increased by the contrast. But the school had far outgrown the strength of a single man; the catechumens pressed eagerly for elementary instruction, and the baptized sought for interpretation of the Bible. Under these circumstances, Origen entrusted the teaching of the catechumens to [Heraclas](#), the brother of the martyr Plutarch, his first pupil.

His own interests became more and more centered in [exegesis](#), and he accordingly studied [Hebrew](#), though there is no certain knowledge concerning his instructor in that language. From about this period (212-213) dates Origen's acquaintance with [Ambrose of Alexandria](#), whom he was instrumental in converting from [Valentinianism](#) to orthodoxy. Later (about 218) Ambrose, a man of wealth, made a formal agreement with Origen to promulgate his writings, and all the subsequent works of Origen (except his sermons, which were not expressly prepared for publication) were dedicated to Ambrose.

In 213 or 214, Origen visited Arabia at the request of the prefect, who wished to have an interview with him; and Origen accordingly spent a brief time in [Petra](#), after which he returned to Alexandria. In the following year, a popular uprising at Alexandria caused Caracalla to let his soldiers plunder the city, shut the schools, and expel all foreigners. The latter measure caused Ambrose to take refuge in [Caesarea](#), where he seems to have made his permanent home; and Origen, who felt that the turmoil hindered his activity as a teacher and imperilled his safety, left Egypt, apparently going with Ambrose to Caesarea, where he spent some time. Here, in conformity with local usage based on Jewish custom, Origen, though not ordained, preached and interpreted the Scriptures at the request of the bishops Alexander of Jerusalem and Theoctistus of Caesarea. When, however, the confusion in Alexandria subsided, Demetrius recalled Origen, probably in 216.

Of Origen's activity during the next decade little is known, but it was obviously devoted to teaching and writing. The latter was rendered the more easy for him by Ambrose, who provided him with more than seven stenographers to take dictation in relays, as many scribes to prepare long-hand copies, and a number of girls to multiply the copies. At the request of Ambrose, he now began a huge commentary on the Bible, beginning with John, and continuing with [Genesis](#), [Psalms](#) 1-25, and [Lamentations](#), besides brief exegeses of selected texts (forming the ten books of his *Stromateis*), two books on the [resurrection](#), and the work *On First Principles*.

Conflict with Demetrius and removal to Caesarea

[\[edit\]](#)

About 230, Origen entered on the fateful journey which was to compel him to give up his work at Alexandria and embittered the next years of his life. Sent to [Greece](#) on some ecclesiastical mission, he paid a visit to Caesarea, where he was heartily welcomed and was ordained a priest, that no further cause for criticism might be given Demetrius, who had strongly disapproved his preaching before ordination while at Caesarea. But Demetrius, taking this well-meant act as an infringement of his rights, was furious, for not only was Origen under his jurisdiction as bishop of Alexandria, but, if Eastern sources may be believed, Demetrius had been the first to introduce episcopal ordination in Egypt. The metropolitan accordingly convened a synod of bishops and presbyters which banished Origen from Alexandria, while a second synod declared his ordination invalid.

Origen accordingly fled from Alexandria in 231, and made his permanent home in Caesarea. A series of attacks on him seems to have emanated from Alexandria, whether for his [self-castration](#) (a capital crime in Roman law) or for alleged [heterodoxy](#) is unknown; but at all events these fulminations were heeded only at Rome, while Palestine, Phoenicia, Arabia, and Achaia paid no attention to them.

At Alexandria, Heraclas became head of Origen's school, and shortly afterward, on the death of Demetrius, was consecrated bishop. At Caesarea, Origen was joyfully received, and was also the guest of [Fimilian](#), bishop of [Caesarea in Cappadocia](#), and of the empress-dowager, [Julia Mamaea](#), at [Antioch](#). The former also visited him at Caesarea, where Origen, deeply loved by his pupils, preached and taught [dialectics](#), [physics](#), [ethics](#), and [metaphysics](#); thus laying his foundation for the crowning theme of theology.

He accordingly sought to set forth all the [science](#) of the time from the Christian point of view, and to elevate Christianity to a theory of the [Universe](#) compatible with Hellenism. In 235, with the accession of [Maximinus Thrax](#), a persecution raged; and for two years Origen is said, though on somewhat doubtful authority, to have remained concealed in the house of a certain Juliana in Caesarea of Cappadocia.

Little is known of the last twenty years of Origen's life. He preached regularly on Wednesdays and Fridays, and later daily. He evidently, however, developed an extraordinary literary productivity, broken by occasional journeys; one of which, to Athens during some unknown year, was of sufficient length to allow him time for research.

After his return from Athens, he succeeded in converting [Beryllus](#), bishop of Bostra, from his [adoptionistic](#) (i.e., belief that Jesus was born human and only became divine after his baptism) views to the orthodox faith; yet in these very years (about 240) probably occurred the attacks on Origen's own orthodoxy which compelled him to defend himself in writing to [Pope Fabian](#) and many bishops. Neither the source nor the object of these attacks is known, though the latter may have been connected with [Novatianism](#) (a strict refusal to accept Christians who had denied their faith under persecution).

After his conversion of Beryllus, however, his aid was frequently invoked against heresies. Thus, when the doctrine was promulgated in Arabia that the soul died and decayed with the body, being restored to life only at the resurrection (see [soul sleep](#)), appeal was made to Origen, who journeyed to Arabia, and by his preaching reclaimed the erring.

There was second outbreak of the [Antonine Plague](#), which at its height in 251 to 266 took the lives of 5,000 a day in Rome. This time it was called the [Plague of Cyprian](#). Emperor [Gaius Messius Quintus Decius](#), believing the plague to be a product of magic, caused by the failure of Christians to recognize him as Divine, began Christian persecutions.<sup>[13]</sup> This time Origen did not escape.<sup>[14]</sup> He was tortured, pilloried, and bound hand and foot to the block for days without yielding.<sup>[*dubious – discuss*][*original research?*][*citation needed*]</sup><sup>[15]</sup> Though he did not die while being tortured, he died three years later due to injuries sustained at the age of 69.<sup>[16]</sup> A later legend, recounted by [Jerome](#) and numerous itineraries place his death and burial at [Tyre](#), but to this little value can be attached.<sup>[17]</sup>

Works

[\[edit\]](#)



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Exegetical writings

[\[edit\]](#)



According to [Epiphanius](#),<sup>[18]</sup> Origen wrote about 6,000 works (*i.e.*, rolls or chapters). A list was given by [Eusebius](#) in his lost *Life of Pamphilus*<sup>[19]</sup>, which was apparently known to Jerome.<sup>[20]</sup> These fall into four classes: [textual criticism](#); exegesis; systematic, practical, and apologetic theology; and [letters](#); besides certain spurious works.

By far the most important work of Origen on textual criticism was the *Hexapla*, a comparative study of various translations of the Old Testament.

The full text of the *Hexapla* is no longer extant. Some portions were discovered in [Milan](#) indicating that at least some individual parts existed much longer than was previously thought. The *Hexapla* has been referred to by later manuscripts and authors, and represented the precursor to the parallel bible.

The *Tetrapla* was an abbreviation of the *Hexapla* in which Origen placed only the translations (Aquila, Symmachus, Theodotion, and the [Septuagint](#)) in parallels.

He was likewise keenly conscious of the textual difficulties in the manuscripts of the New Testament, although he never wrote definitely on this subject. In his exegetical writings he frequently alludes to the variant readings, but his habit of making rough citations in his dictation, the verification being left to the scribes, renders it impossible to deduce his text from his commentaries. Eusebius in *Ecclesiastical History* 6.25.7 strongly implies Origen disputed the authenticity of the Letters of Paul when he wrote that Paul did not write to all the churches that he taught and even to the ones he wrote he only sent a few lines. However, Origen's own writings refer often to the words of Paul.

The exegetical writings of Origen fall into three classes:

- scholia, or brief summaries of the meaning of difficult passages
- [homilies](#)
- "books", or commentaries in the strict sense of the term.

Jerome states that there were scholia on Leviticus, Psalms i.-xv., Ecclesiastes, Isaiah, and part of John. The *Stromateis* were of a similar character, and the margin of *Codex Athous Laura*, 184, contains citations from this work on Rom. 9:23; I Cor. 6:14, 7:31, 34, 9:20-21, 10:9, besides a few other fragments.

Homilies on almost the entire Bible were prepared by Origen, these being taken down after his sixtieth year as he preached. It is not improbable that Origen gave no attention to supervising the publication of his homilies, for only by such a hypothesis can the numerous evidences of carelessness in diction be explained. The exegesis of the homilies was simpler than that of the scientific commentaries, but nevertheless demanded no mean degree of intelligence from the auditor. Origen's chief aim was the practical exposition of the text, verse by verse; and while in such barren books as Leviticus and Numbers he sought to allegorize, the wealth of material in the prophets seldom rendered it necessary for him to seek meanings deeper than the surface afforded. Whether the sermons were delivered in series, or the homilies on a single book were collected from various series, is unknown. The homilies preserved are on Genesis (17), Exodus (13), Leviticus (18), Numbers (28), Joshua (16), Judges (9), I Sam. (2), Psalms xxxvi-xxviii (9), Canticles (2), Isaiah (9), Jeremiah (7 Greek, 2 Latin, 12 Greek and Latin), [Ezekiel](#) (14), and Luke (39).

Extant commentaries of Origen

[edit]

The object of Origen's commentaries was to give an exegesis that discriminated strictly against the incidental, unimportant historical significance, in favour of the deeper, hidden, spiritual truth. At the same time, he neglected neither philological nor geographical, historical nor antiquarian material, to all of which he devoted numerous excursions.

In his commentary on John he constantly considered the exegesis of the Valentinian Heracleon (probably at the instance of Ambrose), and in many other places he implied or expressly cited Gnostic views and refuted them.

Unfortunately, only meagre fragments of the commentaries have survived. Besides the citations in the *Philocalia*, which include fragments of the third book of the commentary on Genesis, Ps. i, iv.1, the small commentary on Canticles, and the second book of the large commentary on the same, the twentieth book of the commentary on Ezekiel, and the commentary on Hosea, and of the commentary on John, only books i, ii, x, xiii, xx, xxviii, xxxii, and a fragment of xix. have been preserved. The commentary on Romans is extant only in the abbreviated version of Rufinus, though some Greek fragments also exist. The eight books preserved of the commentary on Matthew likewise seem to be either a brief reworking or a rough outline.

*Codex Vaticanus*, 1215 gives the division of the twenty-five books of the commentary on Ezekiel, and part of the arrangement of the commentary on Isaiah (beginnings of books VI, VIII, XVI; book X extends from Isa. viii.1 to ix.7; XI from ix.8, to x.11; XII from x.12 to x.23; XIII from x.24 to xi.9; XIV from xi.10 to xii.6; XV from xiii.1 to xiii.16; XVI from xix.1 to xix.17; XVII from xix.18 to xx.6; XVIII from xxi.1 to xxi.17; XXIV from xxii.1 to xxii.25; XXV from xxiii.1 to xxiii.18; XXVI from xxiv.1 to xxv.12; XXVII from xxvi.1 to xxvi.15; XXVIII from xxvi.16 to xxvii.11a; XXX from xxvii.11b to xxviii.29; and XXX treats of xxix.1 sqq.).

The *Codex Athous Laura*, 184, in like manner, gives the division of the fifteen books of the commentary on Romans (except XI and XII) and of the five books on Galatians, as well as the extent of the commentaries on Philippians and Corinthians (Romans I from 1:1 to 1:7; II from 1:8 to 1:25; III from 1:26 to 2:11; IV from 2:12 to 3:15; V from 3:16 to 3:31; VI from 4:1 to 5:7; VII from 5:8 to 5:16; VIII from 5:17 to 6:15; IX from 6:16 to 8:8; X from 8:9 to 8:39; XII from 11:13 to 12:15; XIV from 12:16 to 14:10; XV from 14:11 to the end; Galatians I from 1:1 to 2:2; II from 2:3 to 3:4; III from 3:5 to 4:5; IV from 4:6 to 5:5; and V from 5:6 to 6:18; the commentary on Philippians extended to 4:1; and on Ephesians to 4:13).

Dogmatic, practical, and apologetic writings

[edit]

Among the systematic, practical, and apologetic writings of Origen, mention should first be made of his work *On First Principles*, perhaps written for his more advanced pupils at Alexandria and probably composed between 212 and 215. It is extant only in the free translation of Rufinus, except for fragments of the third and fourth books preserved in the *Philokalia*, and smaller citations in Justinian's letter to Mennas.

In the first book the author considers [God](#), the [Logos](#), the Holy Ghost, reason, and the angels; in the second the world and man (including the incarnation of the Logos, the soul, free will, and eschatology); in the third, the doctrine of sin and redemption; and in the fourth, the Scriptures; the whole being concluded with a résumé of the entire system. The work is noteworthy as the first endeavor to present Christianity as a complete theory of the universe, and was designed to remove the difficulties felt by many Christians concerning the essential basis of their faith.

Earlier in date than this treatise were the two books on the resurrection (now lost, a fate which has also befallen two dialogues on the same theme) dedicated to Ambrose. After his removal to Caesarea, Origen wrote the works, still extant, *On Prayer*, *On Martyrdom*, and *Against Celsus*. The first of these was written shortly before 235 (or possibly before 230), and, after an introduction on the object, necessity, and advantage of [prayer](#), ends with an exegesis of the Lord's Prayer, concluding with remarks on the position, place, and attitude to be assumed during prayer, as well as on the classes of prayer.

The persecution of Maximinus was the occasion of the composition of the *On Martyrdom*, which is preserved in the *Exhortation to Martyrdom*. In it, Origen warns against any trifling with idolatry and emphasizes the duty of suffering martyrdom manfully; while in the second part he explains the meaning of martyrdom. The eight books against [Celsus](#), Contra Celsum<sup>[21]</sup> were written in 248 in reply to the polemic of the pagan philosopher against Christianity.

[Eusebius](#) had a collection of more than one hundred letters of Origen,<sup>[22]</sup> and the list of Jerome speaks of several books of his epistles. Except for a few fragments, only a short letter to [Gregory Thaumaturgus](#) and the epistle to [Sextus Julius Africanus](#) (defending the authenticity of the Greek additions to the book of Daniel) have been preserved.

For forgeries of the writings of Origen made in his lifetime cf. Rufinus, *De adulteratione librorum Origenis*. The *Dialogus de recta in Deum fide*, the *Philosophumena* of [Hippolytus of Rome](#), and the *Commentary on Job* by [Julian of Halicarnassus](#) have also been ascribed to him.

Views

[edit]

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Philosophical and religious

[edit]

Origen, allegedly trained in the school of Clement and by his father, has long been considered essentially a [Platonist](#) with occasional traces of [Stoic](#) philosophy.



While this might yet be the general scholarly consensus, it might be more useful to designate Origen a Middle Platonist (along with Philo of Alexandria), even if such a school never properly existed. Recently, Mark J Edwards has argued that many of Origen's positions are more properly Aristotelian than strictly Platonic (for instance, his philosophical anthropology). Nonetheless, he was thus a pronounced idealist, as one regarding all things temporal and material as insignificant and indifferent, the only real and eternal things being comprised in the idea. He therefore regards as the purely ideal center of this spiritual and eternal world, God, the pure reason, whose creative powers call into being the world with matter as the necessary substratum.

Origen's cosmology is complicated, but he seems to have held that souls existed prior to becoming embodied in an ideal state, and only on account of their own negligence did they fall. This is in fact the impetus for creation, and a repeated trope in Origen is his insistence that diversity is the by-product of the free-will of souls. Thus, material creation is at least implicitly of a lesser ontological category than the immaterial, or spiritual, and the heavy material bodies that man assumes after the fall will eventually be cast off. Origen, however, still insisted on a bodily resurrection, but in contrast to Athenagoras, who believed that earthly bodies would be precisely reconstituted in the hereafter, Origen argued that Paul's notion of a flourishing spiritual body is more appropriate.

He was, indeed, a rigid adherent of the Bible, making no statement without adducing some Scriptural basis. To him the Bible was divinely inspired, as was proved both by the fulfilment of [prophecy](#) and by the immediate impression which the Scriptures made on those who read them. Since the divine Logos spoke in the Scriptures, they were an organic whole and on every occasion he combatted the Gnostic tenet of the inferiority of the Old Testament.

In his exegesis, Origen sought to discover the deeper meaning implied in the Scriptures. One of his chief methods was the translation of proper names, which enabled him, like Philo, to find a deep meaning even in every event of history (see [hermeneutics](#)), but at the same time he insisted on an exact grammatical interpretation of the text as the basis of all exegesis.

A strict adherent of the Church, Origen yet distinguished sharply between the ideal and the empirical Church, representing "a double church of men and angels", or, in Platonic phraseology, the lower church and its celestial ideal. The ideal Church alone was the Church of Christ, scattered over all the earth; the other provided also a shelter for sinners. Holding that the Church, as being in possession of the mysteries, affords the only means of salvation, he was indifferent to her external organization, although he spoke sometimes of the office-bearers as the pillars of the Church, and of their heavy duties and responsibilities.

More important to him was the idea borrowed from Plato of the grand division between the great human multitude, capable of sensual vision only, and those who know how to comprehend the hidden meaning of Scripture and the diverse mysteries, church organization being for the former only.

It is doubtful whether Origen possessed an obligatory creed; at any rate, such a confession of faith was not a norm like the inspired word of Scripture. The reason, illumined by the divine Logos, which is able to search the secret depths of the divine nature, remains as the only source of knowledge.

Theological and dogmatic

[edit]

Origen's conception of God is apophatic—God is a perfect unity, invisible and incorporeal, transcending all things material, and therefore inconceivable and incomprehensible. He is likewise unchangeable, and transcends space and time. But his power is limited by his goodness, justice, and wisdom; and, though entirely free from necessity, his goodness and omnipotence constrained him to reveal himself.

This revelation, the external self-emanation of God, is expressed by Origen in various ways, the Logos being only one of many. Revelation was the first creation of God (cf. Prov. viii. 22), in order to afford creative mediation between God and the world, such mediation being necessary, because God, as changeless unity, could not be the source of a multitudinous creation.

The Logos is the rational creative principle that permeates the universe. Since God eternally manifests himself, the Logos is likewise eternal. He forms a bridge between the created and uncreated, and only through him, as the visible representative of divine wisdom, can the inconceivable and incorporeal God be known. Creation came into existence only through the Logos, and God's nearest approach to the world is the command to create. While the Logos is substantially a unity, he comprehends a multiplicity of concepts, so that Origen terms him, in Platonic fashion, "essence of essences" and "idea of ideas".

The defense of the unity of God against the Gnostics led Origen to maintain the subordination of the Logos to God, and the doctrine of the eternal generation is later.<sup>[*citation needed*]</sup> Origen distinctly emphasised the independence of the Logos as well as the distinction from the being and substance of God. The term "of the same substance with the Father" was not employed. The Logos (and the Holy Spirit also) however, does share in the divinity of God. He is an image, a reflex of God, in wich God communicates his divinity, as light radiating from the sun.

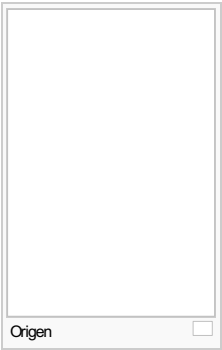
The Logos doctrine and cosmology

[edit]

The activity of the Logos was conceived by Origen in Platonic fashion, as the world soul, wherein God manifested his omnipotence. His first creative act was the divine spirit, as an independent existence; and partial reflexes of the Logos were the created rational beings, who, as they had to revert to the perfect God as their background, must likewise be perfect; yet their perfection, unlike in kind with that of God, the Logos, and the divine spirit, had to be attained. The freedom of the will is an essential fact of the reason, notwithstanding the foreknowledge of God. The Logos, eternally creative, forms an endless series of finite, comprehensible worlds, which are mutually alternative. Combining the Stoic doctrine of a universe without beginning with the Biblical doctrine of the beginning and the end of the world, he conceived of the visible world as the stages of an eternal cosmic process, affording also an explanation of the diversity of human fortunes, rewards, and punishments. The material world, which at first had no place in this eternal spiritual progression, was due to the fall of the spirits from God, the first being the serpent, who was imprisoned in matter and body. The ultimate aim of God in the creation of matter out of nothing was not punishment, but the uprising of the fallen spirits. Man's accidental being is rooted in transitory matter, but his higher nature is formed in the image of the Creator. The soul is divided into the rational and the irrational, the latter being material and transitory, while the former, incorporeal and immaterial, possesses freedom of the will and the power to reascend to purer life. The strong ethical import of this cosmic process can not remain unnoticed. The return to original being through divine reason is the object of the entire cosmic process. Through the worlds which follow each other in eternal succession, the spirits are able to return to Paradise. God so ordered the universe that all individual acts work together toward one cosmic end which culminates in himself. Likewise as to Origen's anthropology, man conceived in the image of God is able by imitating God in good works to become like God, if he first recognizes his own weakness and trusts all to the divine goodness. He is aided by [guardian angels](#), but more especially by the Logos who operates through saints and prophets in proportion to the constitution of these and man's capacity.

Christology

[edit]



The culmination of this gradual revelation is the universal revelation of Christ. In Christ, God, hitherto manifest only as the Lord, appeared as the Father. The incamation of the Logos, moreover, was necessary since otherwise he would not be intelligible to sensual man; but the indwelling of the Logos remained a mystery, which could be represented only by the analogy of his indwelling in the saints; nor could Origen fully explain it. He speaks of a "remarkable body", and in his opinion that the mortal body of Jesus was transformed by God into an ethereal and divine body, Origen approximated the [Docetism](#) that he otherwise abhorred. His concept of the soul of Jesus is likewise uncertain and wavering. He proposes the question whether it was not originally perfect with God but, emanating from him, at his command assumed a material body. As he conceived matter as merely the universal limit of created spirits, so would it be impossible to state in what form the two were combined. He dismissed the solution by referring it to the mystery of the divine governance of the universe. More logically did he declare the material nature of the world to be merely an episode in the spiritual process of development, whose end should be the annihilation of all matter and return to God, who should again be all in all. The doctrine of the resurrection of the body he upholds by the explanation that the Logos maintains the unity of man's existence by ever changing his body into new forms, thus preserving the unity and identity of personality in harmony with the tenet of an endless cosmic process. Origen's concept of the Logos allowed him to make no definite statement on the redemptive work of Jesus. Since sin was ultimately only negative as a lack of pure knowledge, the activity of Jesus was essentially example and instruction, and his human life was only incidental as contrasted with the immanent cosmic activity of the Logos. Origen regarded the death of Jesus as a sacrifice, paralleling it with other cases of self-sacrifice for the general good. On this, Origen's

accord with the teachings of the Church was merely superficial.

Eschatology

[edit]

His idealizing tendency to consider the spiritual alone as real, fundamental to his entire system, led him to combat the "rude"<sup>[<sup>23</sup>]</sup> or "crude"<sup>[<sup>24</sup>]</sup> [Chiliasm](#) (see [Christian eschatology](#)) of a sensual beyond. His position on the literal [resurrection of physical bodies](#) is difficult, but in both the Contra Celsum and On First Principles, Origen affirms some form of bodily resurrection, but eschews the notion that earthly bodies will be raised, on account of their gross materiality.<sup>[<sup>25</sup>]</sup> Yet he constrained himself from breaking entirely with the distinct celestial hopes and representations of Paradise prevalent in the Church. He represents a progressive purification of souls, until, cleansed of all clouds of evil, they should know the truth and God as the Son knew him, see God face to face, and attain a full



possession of the Holy Spirit and union with God. The means of attainment of this end were described by Origen in different ways, the most important of which was his Platonic concept of a purifying fire which should cleanse the world of evil and thus lead to cosmic renovation. By a further spiritualization Origen could call God himself this consuming fire. In proportion as the souls were freed from sin and ignorance, the material world was to pass away, until, after endless eons, at the final end, God should be all in all, and the worlds and spirits should return to a knowledge of God, in Greek this is called **Apokatastasis**.

Character

[edit]

In Origen the Christian Church had its first theologian.<sup>[26]</sup> His teaching was not merely theoretical, but was also imbued with an intense ethical power. To the multitude to whom his instruction was beyond grasp, he left mediating images and symbols, as well as the final goal of attainment. In Origen Christianity blended with the pagan philosophy in which lived the desire for truth and the longing after God. When he died, however, he left no pupil who could succeed him, nor was the church of his period able to become his heir, and thus, his knowledge was buried. Three centuries later his very name was stricken from the books of the Church; yet in the monasteries of the Greeks his influence still lived on, as the spiritual father of Greek monasticism.

Origen's influence on the later Church

[edit]

For quite some time, Origen was counted as one of the most important church fathers and his works were widely used in the Church. His exegetical method was standard of the **School of Alexandria** and the Origenists were an important party in the 4th century debates on **Arianism**.

**Basil the Great** and **Gregory Nazianzen**, e.g., compiled in their first monastery the Philokalia, a collection of Origen's work, though both of them did neither adopt Origenism nor use the Alexandrian allegoric exegesis.

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Much later, Origen got into theological trouble with the Church because of some extreme views adopted by his followers, the Origenists, whose views were attributed to Origen. In the course of this controversy, some of his other teachings came up, which were not accepted by the general church consensus. Among these were the preexistence of souls, **universal salvation** and a hierarchical concept of the **Trinity**. **Rufinus** who translated Origen's works from Greek to Latin in the latter fourth century claimed that seeming heresies in Origen's writings were in fact the result of tampering by his followers. However, **Jerome**, although he at first appreciated Origen's thought, later came to reject him. Eventually, the hetero-orthodox teachings of Origen, and especially some more extreme views of those who claimed to be his followers, were declared **anathema** by a local council in Constantinople 545, and then an ecumenical council (**Fifth Ecumenical Council**) pronounced "15 anathemas" against Origen in 553.<sup>[7]</sup>

The anathema against him in his person, declaring him (among others) a heretic, reads as follows:

If anyone does not anathematize Arius, Eunomius, Macedonius, Apollinaris, Nestorius, Eutyches and Origen, as well as their impious writings, as also all other heretics already condemned and anathematized by the Holy Catholic and Apostolic Church, and by the aforesaid four Holy Synods and [if anyone does not equally anathematize] all those who have held and hold or who in their impiety persist in holding to the end the same opinion as those heretics just mentioned: let him be anathema.<sup>[27]</sup>

As a result of this condemnation, the writings of Origen supporting his teachings in these areas were destroyed. They were either outright destroyed, or they were translated with the appropriate adjustments to eliminate conflict with orthodox Christian doctrine. Therefore, little direct evidence remains to fully confirm or disprove Origen's support of the nine points of anathema against him.

Origen and a form of **apocatastasis** were condemned in 544 by the Patriarch **Mennas of Constantinople** and the condemnation was ratified in 553 by the **Fifth Ecumenical Council**. Many heteroclite views became associated with Origen, and the 15 anathemas against him attributed to the council condemn a form of apocatastasis along with the pre-existence of the soul, animism (a heterodox Christology), and a denial of real and lasting resurrection of the body.<sup>[7]</sup> Some authorities believe these anathemas belong to an earlier local synod.<sup>[28]</sup>

It should also be noted, the Fifth Ecumenical Council has been contested as being an official and authorized Ecumenical Council, as it was established not by the Pope, but the Emperor **Justinian** because of the Pope's resistance to it. It should also be noted that the Fifth Ecumenical Council addressed what was called "The Three Chapters"<sup>[29]</sup> and was against a form of Origenism which truly had nothing to do with Origen and Origenist views. In fact, Popes Vigilius, Pelagius I (556-61), Pelagius II (579-90), and Gregory the Great (590-604) were only aware the Fifth Council specifically dealt with the Three Chapters and make no mention of Origenism or Universalism, nor spoke as if they knew of its condemnation even though Gregory the Great was opposed to the belief of universalism.<sup>[12]</sup>

The Emperor **Justinian** chose the theory of eternal damnation over Apokatastasis and the underlying need for purification of all souls through multiple incarnations.<sup>[30]</sup>

The book *Reincarnation in Christianity*, by the **theosophist** Geddes MacGregor (1978) asserted that Origen believed in **reincarnation**. MacGregor is convinced that Origen believed in and taught about reincarnation but that his texts written about the subject have been destroyed. He admits that there is no extant proof for that position. The allegation was also repeated by **Shirley MacLaine** in her book *Out On a Limb*.

There is, however, no evidence that Origen believed in reincarnation. He wrote about the Greeks' **transmigration of the soul**, with which he did not agree.<sup>[31]</sup> This can be confirmed from the extant writings of Origen. He was cognizant of the concept of transmigration (*metensomatosis* transformation, and loses what it once was, the human soul will not be what it was<sup>[32]</sup> ) from Greek philosophy, but it is repeatedly stated that this concept is not a part of the Christian teaching or scripture. In his Comment on the **Gospel of Matthew**, which stems from a sixth century Latin translation, it is written: "In this place [when Jesus said Elijah was come and referred to John the Baptist] it does not appear to me that by Elijah the soul is spoken of, lest I fall into the doctrine of **transmigration**, which is foreign to the Church of God, and not handed down by the apostles, nor anywhere set forth in the scriptures" (ibid., 13:1:46–53 <sup>[33]</sup>).

Reluctantly<sup>[citation needed]</sup> he remains a father of the church,<sup>[citation needed]</sup> and this can be seen best in the commentaries of **Tyrannius Rufinus**, who visibly struggled with his task of transcribing<sup>[clarification needed]</sup> Origen's works into Latin and the new Roman dogma and made extensive changes to the original text. <sup>[34]</sup>

His thought on the Old Testament was an important link in the development of the medieval system of **Typology**.

See also

[edit]

- Adamantius (Pseudo-Origen)
- Atonement (Ransom view)
- Church fathers
- Christian mystics
- Simlai

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20. <sup>a</sup> *Epist. ad Paulam*, *NPNF*, vi. 46
21. <sup>a</sup> Celsus charged that Jesus was a deceptive magician who did miracles by a magic occult power not by a relationship with the divine. In the ancient world few doubted strange powers existed and were used. So-called magic and the miraculous was common place. See: The Greeks and the Irrational by E. R. Dodds
22. <sup>a</sup> *Historia ecclesiastica.*, VI., xxxvi.3; Eng. transl. *NPNF*, 2 ser. i.278-279.
23. <sup>a</sup> The New Schaff-Herzog Encyclopedia of Religious Knowledge, Vol.8, p. 273
24. <sup>a</sup> *The Anchor Bible Dictionary* (1997) article "Ghiliastri", *The Labyrinth of the World and the Paradise of the Heart* (Johann Amos Comenius, ed. 1998) p. 42 and *Jews and Christians: The Parting of the Ways, A.D. 70 to 135* (James D. G. Dunn, 1999) p. 52.
25. <sup>a</sup> "Origen believes that all spirits will be finally rescued and glorified, each in the form of its individual life, in order to serve a new epoch of the world when sensuous matter disappears of itself." [1]
26. <sup>a</sup> [2]
27. <sup>a</sup> *Medieval Sourcebook: Fifth Ecumenical Council: Constantinople II*, 553
28. <sup>a</sup> Greer, Rowan A. (1979). *Origen*. New York City: Paulist Press. pp. 3. ISBN 0-8091-2198-0.
29. <sup>a</sup> CATHOLIC ENCYCLOPEDIA: Three Chapters
30. <sup>a</sup> Strâuli, Robert (1987). *Origenes der Diamantene*. Zurich: ABZ Verlag. pp. 71, 355–357. ISBN 3-85516-005-8.
31. <sup>a</sup> "Ante-Nicene Fathers/Volume IX/Origen on Matthew/Origen's Commentary on Matthew/Book XIII/Chapter 1 - Wikisource" . En.wikisource.org. 2009-04-19. Retrieved 2009-07-30.
32. <sup>a</sup> "Ante-Nicene Fathers/Volume III/Apologetic/A Treatise on the Soul/Chapter XXXII - Wikisource" . En.wikisource.org. 2009-03-28. Retrieved 2009-07-30.
33. <sup>a</sup> *Origens Commentary on the Gospel of Matthew (Book XIII)*
34. <sup>a</sup> *Commentary on the Epistle to the Romans Books 6-10*. Washington DC: The Catholic University of America Press. 2002. pp. 312–313. ISBN 0-8132-0104-7.

## Resources

[edit]

- Pelikan, Jaroslav. *The Emergence of the Catholic Tradition: 100-600*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1977.
- The Commentary of Origen On S. John's Gospel, the text revised and with a critical introduction and indices by A. (Alan) E. (England) Brooke. Provost of King's College and noted biblical scholar. Two Volumes, Cambridge University Press, Cambridge.1896

*This article includes content derived from the [Schaff-Herzog Encyclopedia of Religious Knowledge](#), 1914, which is in the [public domain](#).*

## External links

[edit]

- Translations
  - Translations of Origen's writing can be found in [Ante-Nicene Fathers](#) or in [The Fathers of the Church](#) .
- Analysis and Criticism
  - Modern
    - [Coptic Church on Origen](#)
    - The two-part Roman Catholic meditation on Origen by Pope Benedict XVI: [April 25, 2007](#) and [May 2, 2007](#) .
  - Ancient
    - [The Anathemas Against Origen](#)
    - [Evagrius Ponticus and the Condemnation of Origen](#)
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  - [Origen](#) in the 1911 [Encyclopædia Britannica](#)
  - [Jewish Encyclopedia: Origen](#)
  - [Origen](#) from New Schaff-Herzog Encyclopedia of Religious Knowledge
- Bibliography
  - [EarlyChurch.org.uk](#) Extensive bibliography and on-line articles.
- Original Texts
  - [Greek and Latin Opera Omnia by Migne Patrologia Graeca, with Analytical Indexes and Concordances \(Lexicon Proprium\)](#)
- Other Resources
  - [Table of Origen's Works with Links to Texts and Translations](#)

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There is no evidence that Paul had known Jesus prior to [the Crucifixion](#). Paul asserted that he received the [Gospel](#) not from any person, but by the [revelation](#) of Jesus Christ.<sup>[[Gal. 1:11–12](#)]</sup> Paul claimed almost total independence from the "mother church" in Jerusalem.<sup>[[10](#)]</sup>

Paul's narrative in Galatians states that 14 years after his conversion he went again to Jerusalem.<sup>[[Gal. 2:1–10](#)]</sup> It is not completely known what happened during these so-called "unknown years," but both Acts and Galatians provide some partial details.<sup>[[17](#)]</sup> At the end of this time, [Barnabas](#) went to find Paul and brought him back to [Antioch](#).<sup>[[Acts 11:26](#)]</sup>

When a famine happened in Judea, around 45–46,<sup>[[18](#)]</sup> Paul and Barnabas journeyed to Jerusalem to deliver financial support from the Antioch community.<sup>[[19](#)]</sup> According to Acts, Antioch had become an alternative centre for Christians following the dispersion of the believers after the death of [Stephen](#). It was in Antioch that the followers of Jesus were first called "Christians."<sup>[[Acts 11:26](#)]</sup>

### First missionary journey [[edit](#)]

Luke, writing c 85-90 (there are arguments that Luke wrote the Acts of the Apostles prior to the destruction of Jerusalem in AD 70), arranges Paul's travels into three separate journeys. The first journey, led by Barnabas, takes Paul from Antioch to Cyprus then southern Asia Minor (Anatolia), and back to Antioch.<sup>[[20](#)]</sup> Antioch served as a major Christian center for Paul's evangelizing.<sup>[[21](#)]</sup>

### Council of Jerusalem [[edit](#)]

*Main article: [Council of Jerusalem](#)*

Most scholars agree that a vital meeting between Paul and the Jerusalem church took place in AD 49 or 50.<sup>[[6](#)]</sup> Paul refers to this meeting in Galatians, and Luke also describes it.<sup>[[Acts 15](#)] [[6](#)]</sup> Most think that [Galatians 2:1](#) corresponds to the Council of Jerusalem in Acts 15.<sup>[[22](#)][[23](#)]</sup> The key question raised was whether [Gentile](#) converts needed to be circumcised.<sup>[[24](#)]</sup> At this meeting, Peter, James, and John accepted Paul's mission to the Gentiles. See also [Circumcision controversy in early Christianity](#).

Jerusalem meetings are mentioned in Acts, in Paul's letters, and some appear in both.<sup>[[22](#)]</sup> For example, the Jerusalem visit for [famine relief](#)<sup>[[Acts 11:27–30](#)]</sup> apparently corresponds to the "first visit" (to Cephas and James only).<sup>[[Gal. 1:18–20](#)][[22](#)]</sup> F. F. Bruce suggested that the "fourteen years" could be from Paul's conversion rather than the first visit to Jerusalem.<sup>[[25](#)]</sup>

### Incident at Antioch [[edit](#)]

*Main article: [The Incident at Antioch](#)*

Despite the agreement achieved at the Council of Jerusalem as understood by Paul, Paul recounts how he later publicly confronted Peter, also called the "Incident at Antioch" over his reluctance to share a meal with Gentile Christians in Antioch.<sup>[[26](#)]</sup>

Writing later of the incident, Paul recounts: "I opposed [Peter] to his face, because he was clearly in the wrong". Paul reports that he told Peter: "You are a Jew, yet you [live like a Gentile and not like a Jew](#). How is it, then, that you [force Gentiles to follow Jewish customs](#)?"<sup>[[Gal. 2:11–14](#)]</sup> Paul also mentions that even [Barnabas](#) (his traveling companion and fellow apostle until that time) sided with Peter.<sup>[[27](#)]</sup>

The final outcome of the incident remains uncertain. The [Catholic Encyclopedia](#) states: "St. Paul's account of the incident leaves no doubt that St. Peter saw the justice of the rebuke." In contrast, [L. Michael White's](#) *From Jesus to Christianity* claims: "The blowup with Peter was a total failure of political bravado, and Paul soon left Antioch as [persona non grata](#), never again to return."<sup>[[28](#)]</sup>

The [primary source](#) for the *Incident at Antioch* is Paul's letter to the Galatians.

### Paul's visits to Jerusalem in Acts and the epistles [[edit](#)]

This table is adapted from White, *From Jesus to Christianity*.<sup>[[22](#)]</sup>

Acts	Epistles
<div><ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>First visit to Jerusalem<sup>[<a href="#">Acts 9:26–27</a>]</sup><ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>after Damascus conversion</li><li>preaches openly in Jerusalem with Barnabas</li></ul></li><li>Second visit to Jerusalem<sup>[<a href="#">Acts 11:29–30</a>]</sup><ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>For famine relief</li></ul></li><li>Third visit to Jerusalem<sup>[<a href="#">Acts 15:1–19</a>]</sup><ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>With Barnabas</li><li>"Council of Jerusalem"</li></ul></li><li>Fourth visit to Jerusalem<sup>[<a href="#">Acts 18:21–22</a>]</sup><ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>To "keep the feast"<sup>[<a href="#">Acts 18:21</a>]</sup></li></ul></li><li>Fifth visit to Jerusalem<sup>[<a href="#">Acts 21:17ff</a>]</sup><ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>Paul arrested</li></ul></li></ul></div>	<div><ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>No visit to Jerusalem immediately after conversion<sup>[<a href="#">Gal. 1:17–18</a>]</sup></li><li>First visit to Jerusalem<sup>[<a href="#">Gal. 1:18–20</a>]</sup><ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>Sees only Cephas (Peter) and James</li></ul></li><li>Second visit to Jerusalem<sup>[<a href="#">Gal. 2:1–10</a>]</sup><ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>With Barnabas and Titus</li><li>Possibly the "Council of Jerusalem"</li><li>Paul agrees to "remember the poor"</li><li>Followed by confrontation with Peter in Antioch<sup>[<a href="#">Gal. 2:11–14</a>]</sup></li></ul></li><li>Third visit to Jerusalem<sup>[<a href="#">29</a>]</sup><ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>Paul delivers the collection for the poor</li></ul></li></ul></div>

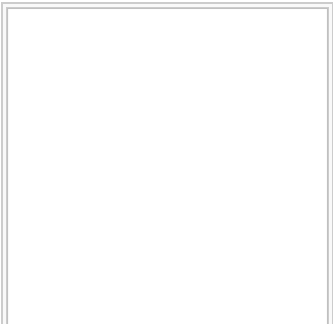
### Resumed mission [[edit](#)]

Around AD 50-52, Paul spent 18 months in Corinth.<sup>[[6](#)]</sup> The reference in Acts to proconsul [Gallio](#) helps ascertain this date.<sup>[[6](#)]</sup> Here he worked with [Silas](#) and [Timothy](#).<sup>[[6](#)]</sup>

After Corinth, the next major center for Paul's activities was [Ephesus](#).<sup>[[6](#)]</sup> Ephesus was an important center for early Christianity from the AD 50s, see also [Early Christianity#Western Anatolia](#). From AD 52 to AD 54, Paul lived here, working with the congregation and apparently organizing missionary activity into the hinterlands.<sup>[[30](#)]</sup> Paul's time here was marked by disturbances and possibly imprisonment. Finally, he was forced to leave.<sup>[[6](#)]</sup>

Next, he traveled to Macedonia before going probably to Corinth for three months (AD 56-57) before his final visit to Jerusalem.<sup>[[6](#)]</sup>

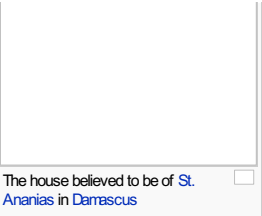
### Arrest and death [[edit](#)]



Paul arrived in Jerusalem .AD 57 with a collection of money for the congregation there.<sup>[[6](#)]</sup> Acts reports that the church welcomed Paul gladly, but it was apparently a proposal of James that led to his arrest.<sup>[[6](#)]</sup> Paul caused a stir when he appeared at the Temple, and he escaped being killed by the crowd by being taken into custody.<sup>[[6](#)]</sup> He was held as a prisoner for two years in [Caesarea](#) until, in AD 59, a new governor reopened his case.<sup>[[6](#)]</sup> He appealed to Caesar as a [Roman citizen](#) and was sent to Rome for trial.<sup>[[6](#)]</sup> Acts reports that he was shipwrecked on [Malta](#)<sup>[[6](#)]</sup> where he was met by [St Publius](#)<sup>[[Acts 28:7](#)]</sup> and the islanders, who showed him "unusual kindness."<sup>[[Acts 28:1](#)]</sup> He arrived in Rome c AD 60 and spent two years under house arrest.<sup>[[6](#)]</sup>

[Irenaeus of Lyons](#) believed that [Peter](#) and [Paul](#) had been the founders of the Church in Rome and had appointed [Linus](#) as succeeding [bishop](#).<sup>[[31](#)]</sup> Though not considered a bishop of Rome, Paul is considered highly responsible for bringing the Christianity to Rome.

Tradition has said that Paul was [beheaded](#), likely at [Tre Fontane Abbey](#) (English: Three Fountains Abbey). By comparison, Peter was [crucified](#) upside-down. This account fits with the report from Acts that Paul was a Roman citizen and would have been accorded the more merciful execution. Paul's death is commonly dated to c 60-62<sup>[[32](#)]</sup>



The house believed to be of [St. Ananias](#) in [Damascus](#)

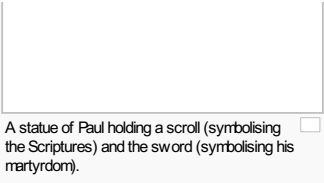


[Bab Kisan](#), believed to be where [St. Paul](#) escaped from [persecution](#) in [Damascus](#)



Icon of [James the Just](#), whose judgment was adopted in the [Apostolic Decree](#) of [Acts 15:19-29](#), c. 50 AD.





or c 62-65,<sup>[6]</sup> or c 65-67,<sup>[33]</sup> in any case during the reign of **Nero**.

In June 2009, Pope **Benedict XVI** announced excavation results concerning the **tomb of Saint Paul** at the **Basilica of Saint Paul Outside the Walls**. The sarcophagus itself was not opened but examined by means of a probe, which revealed pieces of incense and purple and blue linen as well as small bone fragments. The bone was radiocarbon dated to the 1st to 2nd century. According to the Vatican, this seems to confirm the tradition of the tomb being Saint Paul's.<sup>[34]</sup>

See also: *Basilica of Saint Paul Outside the Walls#The tomb of St. Paul*

Writings

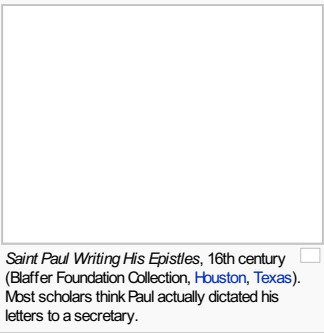
[edit]

Main article: *Authorship of the Pauline Epistles*

Thirteen **epistles** in the **New Testament** are traditionally attributed to Paul, of which seven are almost universally accepted, three are considered in some academic circles as other than Pauline for textual and grammatical reasons, and the other three are **in dispute in those same circles**.<sup>[35]</sup> Paul apparently dictated all his epistles through a secretary (or **amanuensis**), who would usually paraphrase the gist of his message, as was the practice among first-century scribes.<sup>[36][37]</sup> These epistles were circulated within the Christian community, where they were read aloud by members of the church along with other works. Paul's epistles were accepted early as scripture and later established as **Canon of Scripture**. Critical scholars regard Paul's epistles (written 50-62)<sup>[21]</sup> to be the earliest-written books of the New Testament. They are referenced as early as c. 96 by **Clement of Rome**.<sup>[38]</sup>

Authorship

[edit]



Paul's letters are largely written to churches which he had visited; he was a great traveler, visiting **Cyprus**, **Asia Minor** (modern **Turkey**), mainland **Greece**, **Crete**, and **Rome** bringing the **teachings of Jesus of Nazareth** with him. His letters are full of expositions of what Christians should believe and how they should live. He does not tell his correspondents (or the modern reader) much about the life of Jesus; his most explicit references are to the **Last Supper**<sup>[1 Cor. 11:17-34]</sup> and the **crucifixion and resurrection**.<sup>[1 Cor. 15]</sup> His specific references to Jesus' teaching are likewise sparse,<sup>[1 Cor. 7:10-11] [9:14]</sup> raising the question, still disputed, as to how consistent **his account of the faith** is with that of the four canonical Gospels, Acts, and the **Epistle of James**. The view that Paul's Christ is very different from the **historical Jesus** has been expounded by **Adolf Hamack** among many others. Nevertheless, he provides the first written account of what it is to be a Christian and thus of Christian spirituality.

Of the thirteen letters traditionally attributed to Paul and included in the Western New Testament canon, there is little or no dispute that Paul actually wrote at least **seven**, those being **Romans**, **First Corinthians**, **Second Corinthians**, **Galatians**, **Philippians**, **First Thessalonians**, and **Philemon**. **Hebrews**, which was ascribed to him in antiquity, was questioned even then, never having an ancient attribution, and in modern times is considered by most experts as not by Paul (see also **Antilegomena**). The authorship of the remaining six Pauline epistles is disputed to varying degrees.

The authenticity of **Colossians** has been questioned on the grounds that it contains an otherwise unparalleled description (among his writings) of Jesus as 'the image of the invisible God,' a **Christology** found elsewhere only in St. John's gospel. On the other hand, the personal notes in the letter connect it to Philemon, unquestionably the work of Paul. More problematic is **Ephesians**, a very similar letter to Colossians, but which reads more like a manifesto than a letter. It is almost entirely lacking in personal reminiscences. Its style is unique. It lacks the emphasis on the cross to be found in other Pauline writings, reference to the **Second Coming** is missing, and Christian marriage is exalted in a way which contrasts with the reference in **1 Cor. 7:8-9**. Finally, it exalts the Church in a way suggestive of a second generation of Christians, 'built upon the foundation of the apostles and prophets' now past.<sup>[39]</sup> The defenders of its Pauline authorship argue that it was intended to be read by a number of different churches and that it marks the final stage of the development of Paul of Tarsus's thinking.

The **Pastoral Epistles**, 1 and 2 Timothy, and Titus have likewise been put in question as Pauline works. Three main reasons are advanced: first, their difference in vocabulary, style and **theology** from Paul's acknowledged writings; secondly, the difficulty in fitting them into Paul's biography as we have it.<sup>[40]</sup> They, like Colossians and Ephesians, were written from prison but suppose Paul's release and travel thereafter. Finally, the concerns expressed are very much the practical ones as to how a church should function. They are more about maintenance than about mission.

2 Thessalonians, like Colossians, is questioned on stylistic grounds, with scholars noting, among other peculiarities, a dependence on 1 Thessalonians yet a distinctiveness in language from the Pauline corpus.

Atonement

[edit]

Main article: *Atonement*

For its theology of atonement, the Christian church owes a unique debt to the writings of Paul.<sup>[41]</sup> Paul taught that Christians are redeemed from the Law and from sin by Jesus' death and resurrection.<sup>[41]</sup> His death was an expiation, and by Christ's blood peace is made between God and man.<sup>[41]</sup> By baptism, a Christian mystically shares in Jesus' death and in his victory over death, gaining, as a free gift, a new, justified status of sonship.<sup>[41]</sup>

Relationship with Judaism

[edit]

Main article: *Paul of Tarsus and Judaism*

Some scholars see Paul (or Shaul) as completely in line with first-century Judaism (a "**Pharisee**"), others see him as opposed to first-century Judaism (see **Antinomianism in the New Testament** and **Marcionism**), while still others see him as somewhere in between these two extremes, opposed to "Ritual Laws" (see for example **Circumcision controversy in early Christianity**) but in full agreement on "**Divine Law**". These views of Paul are paralleled by the views of **Biblical law in Christianity**. See also **Expounding of the Law** versus **Antithesis of the Law**.

Paul's theology of the gospel accelerated the separation of the messianic sect of Christians from Judaism, a development contrary to Paul's own intent.<sup>[6]</sup> He wrote that faith in Christ was alone decisive in salvation for Jews and Gentiles alike, making the schism between the followers of Christ and mainstream Jews inevitable and permanent.<sup>[6]</sup> He successfully argued that Gentile converts did not need to become Jews, get circumcised, follow Jewish dietary restrictions, or otherwise observe Jewish Law.<sup>[6]</sup> Nevertheless, in Romans he insisted on the positive value of the Law, as a moral guide.

E. P. Sanders' publications<sup>[42]</sup> have since been taken up by Professor **James Dunn** who coined the phrase "The **New Perspective on Paul**"<sup>[43]</sup> and N.T. Wright,<sup>[44]</sup> the Anglican Bishop of Durham. Wright, noting a difference between Romans and Galatians, the latter being much more positive about the continuing covenantal relationship between God and his ancient people than the former, contends that works are not insignificant but rather proof of attaining the redemption of Jesus Christ by grace (free gift received by faith)<sup>[Rom 2:13ff]</sup> and that Paul distinguishes between works which are signs of ethnic identity and those which are a sign of obedience to Christ.

World to come



[edit]



See also: *Christian eschatology*, *Second Coming*, and *End times*

Paul believed that Jesus would return within his lifetime.<sup>[11]</sup> He expected that Christians who had died in the mean time would be **resurrected** to share in **God's kingdom**, and he believed that the saved would be transformed, assuming spiritual bodies.<sup>[11]</sup>

Paul's teaching about the end of the world is expressed most clearly in his letters to the Christians at Thessalonica. Heavily persecuted, it appears that they had written asking him first about those who had died already, and, secondly, when they should expect the end. Paul regarded the age as passing and, in such difficult times, he therefore encouraged marriage as a means of happiness.<sup>[*citation needed*]</sup> He assures them that **the dead will rise first** and be followed by those left alive.<sup>[1 Thes. 4:16ff]</sup> This suggests an imminence of the end but he is unspecific about times and seasons, and encourages his hearers to expect a delay.<sup>[45]</sup> The form of the end will be a battle between Jesus and the **man of lawlessness**<sup>[2 Thess. 2:3]</sup> whose conclusion is the triumph of Christ.

**Role of women**

[edit]

*Main article: **Paul of Tarsus and women***

Paul restricted the role of women in the church, including as prophets and also apparently as apostles.<sup>[11]</sup>

Influence on Christianity

[edit]



Paul's influence on Christian thinking arguably has been more significant than any other New Testament author.<sup>[5]</sup> Paul declared that faith in Christ made the Torah unnecessary for salvation, exalted the Christian church as the body of Christ, and depicted the world outside the Church as under judgment.<sup>[6]</sup>

**Lord's Supper**

[edit]

Paul's writings include the earliest reference to the supper of the Lord, a rite traditionally identified as the Christian **Eucharist**, as instituted by Christ at the **Last Supper**.

Some contemporary scholars hold that the Lord's supper had its origins in a pagan context, where dinners to memorialize the dead were common and the Jewish prohibition against drinking blood did not prevail. They conclude the "Lord's Supper" that Paul describes probably originated in the Christian communities that he had founded in Asia Minor and Greece.<sup>[*citation needed*]</sup>

**Eastern tradition**

[edit]

In the East, church fathers reduced the element of election in Romans 9 to divine foreknowledge.<sup>[6]</sup> The themes of predestination found in Western Christianity do not appear in Eastern theology.

Western tradition

[edit]

Augustine's foundational work on the gospel as a gift (grace), on morality as life in the Spirit, on predestination, and on original sin all derives from Paul, especially Romans.<sup>[6]</sup>

In the Reformation, Martin Luther expressed Paul's doctrine of faith most strongly as justification by **faith alone**.<sup>[6]</sup> John Calvin developed Augustine's predestination into double predestination.<sup>[6]</sup>

Modern theology

[edit]

In his commentary The Epistle to the Romans (Ger. Der Römerbrief; particularly in the thoroughly re-written second edition of 1922) **Karl Barth** argued that the God who is revealed in the cross of Jesus challenges and overthrows any attempt to ally God with human cultures, achievements, or possessions. Many theologians believe this work to be the most important theological treatise since Friedrich Schleiermacher's On Religion: Speeches to its Cultured Despisers.

As in the Eastern tradition in general, Western humanists interpret the reference to election in Romans 9 as reflecting divine foreknowledge.<sup>[6]</sup>

Church tradition

[edit]



Various Christian writers have suggested more details about Paul's life.

**1 Clement** reports this about Paul:<sup>[46]</sup>

"By reason of jealousy and strife Paul by his example pointed out the prize of patient endurance. After that he had been seven times in bonds, had been driven into exile, had been stoned, had preached in the East and in the West, he won the noble renown which was the reward of his faith, having taught righteousness unto the whole world and having reached the farthest bounds of the West; and when he had borne his testimony before the rulers, so he departed from the world and went unto the holy place, having been found a notable pattern of patient endurance."

Commenting on this passage, **Raymond Brown** writes that while it "does not explicitly say" that Paul was martyred in Rome, "such a martyrdom is the most reasonable interpretation."<sup>[47]</sup>

**Eusebius of Caesarea**, who wrote in the fourth century, states that Paul was beheaded in the reign of the **Roman Emperor Nero**. This event has been dated either to the year 64, when Rome was devastated by a fire, or a few years later, to 67. The **San Paolo alle Tre Fontane** church was built on the location where the execution was believed to have taken

The Pilgrim Image of Saint Paul in the Roman Catholic Diocese of Novaliches.

place. A **Roman Catholic** liturgical **solemnity of Peter and Paul**, celebrated on June 29, may reflect the day of his **martyrdom**, other sources have articulated the tradition that Peter and Paul died on the same day (and possibly the same year).<sup>[48]</sup> A number of other sources including **Clement of Rome**, say that Paul survived Rome and went to "the limits of the west."<sup>[49]</sup> Some hold the view that he could have revisited Greece and Asia Minor after his trip to Spain, and might then have been arrested in Troas, and taken to Rome and executed.<sup>[2 Tim 4:13]</sup> A tradition holds that Paul was interred with Saint Peter *ad Catacumbas* by the **via Appia** until moved to what is now the **Basilica of Saint Paul Outside the Walls** in Rome. Bede, in his *Ecclesiastical History*, writes that **Pope Vitalian** in 665 gave Paul's relics (including a cross made from his prison chains) from the **crypts of Lucina** to King **Oswy of Northumbria**, northern Britain. However, Bede's use of the word "relic" was not limited to corporal remains.

Paul, who was quite possibly martyred in **Rome**, has long been associated with that city and its church. Paul is the patron saint of **London**.

Speculative views

[edit]



*Main article: **Pauline Christianity***

**Elaine Pagels**, professor of religion at **Princeton** and an authority on **Gnosticism**, argues that Paul was a Gnostic <sup>[50]</sup> and that the anti-Gnostic Pastoral Epistles were "pseudo-Pauline" forgeries written to rebut this.

British Jewish scholar **Hyam Maccoby** contends that the Paul as described in the **Book of Acts** and the view of Paul gleaned from his own writings are very different people. Some difficulties have been noted in the account of his life. Additionally, the speeches of Paul, as recorded in Acts, have been argued to show a different turn of mind. Paul as described in the Book of Acts is much more interested in factual history, less in theology; ideas such as justification





A parish dedicated to **Saint Paul** in the **Roman Catholic Diocese of Cubao**.

by faith are absent as are references to the Spirit.

On the other hand, according to Maccoby, there are no references to **John the Baptist** in the **Pauline Epistles**, but Paul mentions him several times in the

Facial composite of Paul the Apostle by experts of the **LKA NRW**, Germany

Book of Acts.

**F.C.Baur** (1792–1860), professor of theology at Tübingen in Germany, the first scholar to critique Acts and the Pauline Epistles, and founder of the so-called **Tübingen School** of theology, argued that Paul, as the "Apostle to the Gentiles", was in violent opposition to the original 12 Apostles. Baur considers the Acts of the Apostles were late and unreliable. This debate has continued ever since, with **Adolf Deissmann** (1866–1937) and **Richard Reitzenstein** (1861–1931) emphasising Paul's Greek inheritance and **Albert Schweitzer** stressing his dependence on Judaism.

Maccoby theorizes that Paul synthesized Judaism, Gnosticism, and mysticism to create Christianity as a cosmic savior religion. According to Maccoby, Paul's Pharisaism was his own invention, though actually he was probably associated with the Sadducees. Maccoby attributes the origins of Christian **anti-Semitism** to Paul and claims that Paul's view of women, though inconsistent, reflects his Gnosticism in its misogynist aspects.<sup>[51]</sup>

Professor **Robert Eisenman** of **California State University, Long Beach** argues that Paul was a member of the **family of Herod the Great**.<sup>[52]</sup> Professor Eisenman makes a connection between Paul and an individual identified by Josephus as "Saulus," a "kinsman of Agrippa."<sup>[53]</sup> Another oft-cited element of the case for Paul as a member of Herod's family is found in **Romans 16:11** where Paul writes, "Greet Herodion, my kinsman." This is a minority view in the academic community.

Among the critics of Paul the Apostle was **Thomas Jefferson** who wrote that Paul was the "first corrupter of the doctrines of Jesus."<sup>[54]</sup>

**Howard Brenton**'s 2005 play *Paul* also takes a skeptical view of his conversion.

**F.F. Powell** argues that Paul made use of many of the ideas of the Greek philosopher **Plato** in his epistles, sometimes even using the same metaphors and language.<sup>[55]</sup> For example, in **Phaedrus**, **Socrates** says that the heavenly ideals are perceived as though "through a glass dimly."<sup>[56]</sup> These words are echoed by Paul in **1 Corinthians 13:12**.

See also

[edit]

- Achaichus
- Authorship of the Pauline Epistles
- Christian mystics
- New Covenant
- Old Testament: Christian views of the Law
- Pauline Christianity
- Pauline Epistles
- Persecution of Christians in the New Testament
- Persecution of religion in ancient Rome

Endnotes and citations

[edit]

1.

<sup>^</sup> <sup>a</sup> <sup>b</sup> <sup>c</sup> Harris, p. 411

2.

<sup>^</sup> **Bauer lexicon**; **Acts 13:9**, from "The New Testament of Our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ: According to the **Received Greek Text**" (University Press, Cambridge 1876)

3.

<sup>^</sup> Encyclopedia Britannica, Saint Paul the Apostle, 2008, O.Ed.

4.

<sup>^</sup> "The Canon Debate," McDonald & Sanders editors, 2002, chapter 32, page 577, by **James D. G. Dunn**: "For *Peter was probably in fact and effect the bridge-man* (pontifex maximus!) *who did more than any other to hold together the diversity of first-century Christianity*. James the brother of Jesus and Paul, the two other most prominent leading figures in first-century Christianity" [Italics original]

5.

<sup>^</sup> <sup>a</sup> <sup>b</sup> <sup>c</sup> *Oxford Dictionary of the Christian Church* ed. F.L. Lucas (Oxford) entry on St. Paul

6.

<sup>^</sup> <sup>a</sup> <sup>b</sup> <sup>c</sup> <sup>d</sup> <sup>e</sup> <sup>f</sup> <sup>g</sup> <sup>h</sup> <sup>i</sup> <sup>j</sup> <sup>k</sup> <sup>l</sup> <sup>m</sup> <sup>n</sup> <sup>o</sup> <sup>p</sup> <sup>q</sup> <sup>r</sup> <sup>s</sup> <sup>t</sup> <sup>u</sup> <sup>v</sup> <sup>w</sup> <sup>x</sup> <sup>y</sup> <sup>z</sup> <sup>aa</sup> <sup>ab</sup> "Paul, St" Cross, F. L., ed. The Oxford dictionary of the Christian church. New York: Oxford University Press. 2005

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<sup>^</sup> Walton, Steve (2000). *Leadership and Lifestyle: The Portrait of Paul in the Miletus Speech and 1 Thessalonians* . Cambridge University Press. pp. 3. ISBN 0521780063.

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<sup>^</sup> Hare, Douglas R. A. (1987), "Introduction" , in Knocks, John, *Chapters in a Life of Paul* (Revised ed.), Mercer University Press!, pp. x, ISBN 0865542813

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<sup>^</sup> Maccoby, Hyam (1998). *The mythmaker* (Barnes and Noble ed.). Barnes and Noble. pp. 4. ISBN 0760707871.

10.

<sup>^</sup> <sup>a</sup> <sup>b</sup> <sup>c</sup> Harris, p. 316-320

11.

<sup>^</sup> <sup>a</sup> <sup>b</sup> <sup>c</sup> <sup>d</sup> Ehrman, Bart. Peter, Paul, and Mary Magdalene: The Followers of Jesus in History and Legend. Oxford University Press, USA. 2006. ISBN 0-19-530013-0

12.

<sup>^</sup> **Galatians 1:13-14, Philipians 3:6, and Acts 8:1-3**

13.

<sup>^</sup> Bromiley, Geoffrey William (1979). *International Standard Bible Encyclopedia: A-D (International Standard Bible Encyclopedia (Wbeerdmans))*. Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Company. pp. 689. ISBN 0-8028-3781-6.

14.

<sup>^</sup> Barnett, Paul (2002). *Jesus the Rise of Early Christianity: A History of New Testament Times*. InterVarsity Press. pp. 21. ISBN 0-8308-2699-8.

15.

<sup>^</sup> L. Niswonger, Richard (1993). *New Testament History*. Zondervan Publishing Company. pp. 200. ISBN 0-310-31201-9.

16.

<sup>^</sup> Hengel, Martin and Anna Maria Schwemer, trans. John Bowden. *Paul Between Damascus and Antioch: The Unknown Years*, Westminster John Knox Press, 1997. isbn=0664257364. Online: [http://books.google.com/books?id=PRiKvslqctkC&pg=PA43&vq=%22the+baptism+of+Saul/Paul+in+Damascus+%22&dq=paul+baptized+damascus&as\\_brr=3&sig=DLbwPWBw-HL4JYp6MnF83Zsxoog](http://books.google.com/books?id=PRiKvslqctkC&pg=PA43&vq=%22the+baptism+of+Saul/Paul+in+Damascus+%22&dq=paul+baptized+damascus&as_brr=3&sig=DLbwPWBw-HL4JYp6MnF83Zsxoog)

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<sup>^</sup> Barnett, Paul *The Birth Of Christianity: The First Twenty Years* (Eerdmans Publishing Co. 2005) ISBN 0802827810 p. 200

18.

<sup>^</sup> Ogg, George, *Chronology of the New Testament in Peake's Commentary on the Bible* (Nelson) 1963)

19.

<sup>^</sup> Barnett p. 83

20.

<sup>^</sup> Map of first missionary journey

21.

<sup>^</sup> <sup>a</sup> <sup>b</sup> Harris

22.

<sup>^</sup> <sup>a</sup> <sup>b</sup> <sup>c</sup> <sup>d</sup> White, L. Michael (2004). *From Jesus to Christianity* . HarperCollins. pp. 148–149. ISBN 0060526556.

23.

<sup>^</sup> **Raymond E. Brown** in *Introduction to the New Testament* argues that they are the same event but each from a different viewpoint with its own bias.

24.

<sup>^</sup> **Acts 15:2ff; Galatians 2:1ff**

25.

<sup>^</sup> *Paul: Apostle of the Free Spirit*, **F. F. Bruce**, Paternoster 1980, p.151

26.

<sup>^</sup> **Catholic Encyclopedia: Judaizers** see section titled: "The Incident At Antioch"

27.

<sup>^</sup> **Catholic Encyclopedia: Judaizers** : "On their arrival Peter, who up to this had eaten with the Gentiles, "withdrew and separated himself, fearing them who were of the circumcision," and by his example drew with him not only the other Jews, but even Barnabas, Paul's fellow-labourer."

28.

<sup>^</sup> White, L. Michael (2004). *From Jesus to Christianity* . HarperSanFrancisco. pp. 170. ISBN 0-06-052655-6.

29.

<sup>^</sup> **Romans 15:2ff, 8-9; 2Corinthians 8-9, 1 Corinthians 15:1-3**

30.

<sup>^</sup> "Paul, St." Cross, F. L., ed. The Oxford dictionary of the Christian church. New York: Oxford University Press. 2005

31.

<sup>^</sup> **Ireneaus Against Heresies 3.3** :2: the "...Church founded and organized at Rome by the two most glorious apostles, Peter and Paul; as also [by pointing out] the faith preached to men, which comes down to our time by means of the successions of the bishops. ...The blessed apostles, then, having founded and built up the Church, committed into the hands of Linus the office of the episcopate."

32.

<sup>^</sup> White, From Jesus to Christianity

33.

<sup>^</sup> **St-Paul-Outside-the-Walls** homepage

34.

<sup>^</sup> **St Paul's tomb unearthed in Rome** from BBC News (2006–12–08); <http://www.dw-world.de/dw/article/0,,4442169,00.html?maca=en-rss-en-all-1573-rdf>

35.

<sup>^</sup> p. 316-320

36.

<sup>^</sup> Harris, p. 316-320. Harris cites **Galatians 6:11, Romans 16:22, Colossians 4:18, 2 Thessalonians 3:17, Philemon 19**

37.

<sup>^</sup> **Joseph Barber Lightfoot** in his *Commentary on the Epistle to the Galatians* writes: "At this point[Gal. 6:11] the apostle takes the pen from his amanuensis, and the concluding paragraph is written with his own hand. From the time when letters began to be forged in his name[2 Thes. 2:2; 2 Thes. 3:17] it seems to have been his practice to close with a few words in his own handwriting, as a precaution against such forgeries... In the present case he writes a whole paragraph, summing up the main lessons of the epistle in terse, eager, disjointed sentences. He writes it, too, in large, bold characters (Gr. *pelikoiis grammasin*), that his handwriting may reflect the energy and determination of his soul."

38.

<sup>^</sup> **Clement 47:1**

39.

<sup>^</sup> Brown, R.E., *The Churches the Apostles left behind* p.48.

40.

<sup>^</sup> Barrett, C.K. *the Pastoral Epistles* p.4ff.

41.

<sup>^</sup> <sup>a</sup> <sup>b</sup> <sup>c</sup> <sup>d</sup> "Atonement." Cross, F. L., ed. The Oxford dictionary of the Christian church. New York: Oxford University Press. 2005

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<sup>^</sup> *Paul and Palestinian Judaism* in 1977; *Paul, the Law, and the Jewish People* in 1983

43.

<sup>^</sup> **J.D.G. Dunn's** Manson Memorial Lecture (4.11.1982): *The New Perspective on Paul*! BJRL 65(1983), 95–122.



44. <sup>↑</sup>*New Perspectives on Paul*

45. <sup>↑</sup>Rowlands, Christopher. *Christian Origins* (SPCK 1985) p.113

46. <sup>↑</sup>The First Epistle of Clement to the Corinthians, 5:5–6, translated by J.B. Lightfoot in Lightfoot, Joseph Barber (1890). *The Apostolic Fathers: A Revised Text with Introductions, Notes, Dissertations, and Translations* . Macmillan. pp. 274. OCLC 54248207 .

47. <sup>↑</sup>Brown, Raymond Edward; John Paul Meier (1983). *Antioch and Rome: New Testament Cradles of Catholic Christianity* . Mahwah, NJ: Paulist Press. pp. 124. ISBN 0809125323.

48. <sup>↑</sup>Lactanius, John Chrysostom, Sulpicius Severus all agree with Eusebius' claim that Peter and Paul died under Nero. Lactantius, *Of the Manner in Which the Persecutors Died* II; John Chrysostom, *Concerning Lowliness of Mind* 4; Sulpicius Severus, *Chronica* I.28–29

49. <sup>↑</sup>The apocryphal Acts of Paul, the apocryphal Acts of Peter, the Muratorian Fragment and First Epistle of Clement 5:6 all say Paul survived Rome and traveled west

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51. <sup>↑</sup>Maccoby, Ch. 1

52. <sup>↑</sup>See Paul as Herodian, JHC 3/1 (Spring, 1996), 110-122. http://depts.drew.edu/jhc/eisenman.html

53. <sup>↑</sup>*Antiquities*, Book XX, Chapter 9:4. http://www.ccel.org/jjosephus/works/ant-20.htm

54. <sup>↑</sup>*The Writings of Thomas Jefferson: Being his Autobiography, Correspondence, Reports, Messages, Addresses, and Other Writings, Official and Private. Published by the Order of the Joint Committee of Congress on the Library, from the Original Manuscripts, Deposited in the Department of State, With Explanatory Nites, Tables of Contents, and a Copious Index to Each Volume, as well as a General Index to the Whole*, by the Editor H. A. Washington. Vol. VII. Published by Taylor Maury, Washington, D.C., 1854.

55. <sup>↑</sup>Powell, F. F. *Saint Paul's Homage to Plato* , worldandl.com retrieved on Nov. 16, 2008.

56. <sup>↑</sup>Plato *Phaedrus* translated by Benjamin Jowett

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External links

[\[edit\]](#)

- Saint Paul of Tarsus: the true story
- Catholic Encyclopedia: Paul of Tarsus
- Encyclopædia Britannica: Paul
- Paul's mission and letters From PBS Frontline series on the earliest Christians.
- The Apostle and the Poet: Paul and Aratus Dr. Riemer Faber
- Maps of Paul's three missionary journeys and final captive journey
- The Apostle Paul's Shipwreck: An Historical Examination of Acts 27 and 28
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Categories: Christian religious leaders | Judeo-Christian topics | Letter writers | New Testament people | People executed by decapitation | Prophets in Christianity | Religious writers | Christian writers | Saints from the Holy Land | Palestinian Roman Catholic saints | Anatolian Roman Catholic saints | Saints from Anatolia | Theologians | Jews and Judaism-related controversies | Biblical apostles | Apostle Paul | 1st-century Romans | 1st-century writers | Saints of the Golden Legend | Early Hebrew Christians | 65 deaths | 1st-century Christian martyr saints | People executed by the Roman Empire | 1st-century executions











Church of the Primacy of St. Peter on the [Sea of Galilee](#).  
Traditional site where [Jesus Christ](#) appeared to his disciples after his resurrection and, according to Catholic tradition, established Peter's supreme jurisdiction over the Christian church.

Isca<sup>riot</sup>.<sup>[Acts 1:15]</sup> He was twice arraigned, with John, before the **Sanhedrin** and directly defied them.<sup>[Acts 4:7–22] [5:18–42]</sup> He undertook a missionary journey to **Lydda**, **Joppa** and **Caesarea**,<sup>[9:32–10:2]</sup> becoming instrumental in the decision to evangelise the **Gentiles**.<sup>[10]</sup>

About halfway through, the [Acts of the Apostles](#) turns its attention away from Peter and to the activities of Paul, and the Bible is fairly silent on what occurred to Peter afterwards.

## Council of Jerusalem

*Main article: [Council of Jerusalem](#)*

At the council of Jerusalem (c 50), the early Church, Paul and the leaders of the Jerusalem church met and decided to embrace Gentile converts. Acts portrays Peter as successfully opposing the Christian Pharisees who insisted on circumcision and the rest of the Mosaic law.<sup>[1]</sup>

## Epistles

Peter is mentioned briefly in Paul's [Epistle to the Galatians](#), which mentions a trip by Paul to [Jerusalem](#) where he meets Peter, and a trip by Peter to [Antioch](#) <sup>[Gal. 2:11-14]</sup> where Paul rebuked him for treating Gentile converts as inferior to Jewish Christians.<sup>[1]</sup> (See [The Incident at Antioch](#).) Galatians is accepted as authentic by almost all scholars, so these are the earliest mentions of Peter to be written.

Church tradition ascribes the epistles [First](#) and [Second Peter](#) to Apostle Peter.<sup>[1]</sup> as does the text of 2 Peter itself. First Peter implies the author is in "Babylon", which has been held to be a coded reference to Rome.<sup>[1]</sup> Some scholars regard First Peter as not authored by him,<sup>[1]</sup> and there is still considerable debate about the Petrine authorship of Second Peter. However the Greek in both books are similar, and the early Church was adamantly opposed to [pseudographical](#) authorship.<sup>[1]</sup>

## Accounts outside the New Testament

In Catholic tradition, Peter is said to have founded the church in Rome with Paul, served as its bishop, authored two epistles, and then met martyrdom there along with Paul.<sup>[2]</sup>

## Antioch and Corinth

Later accounts expand on the brief Biblical mention of his visit to [Antioch](#). The [Liber Pontificalis](#) (9th century) mentions Peter as having served as bishop of Antioch before his journey to Rome.<sup>[16]</sup> Historians have furnished other evidence of Peter's sojourn in Antioch.<sup>[17]</sup> Subsequent tradition held that Peter had been the first [Patriarch of Antioch](#).

He might have visited [Corinth](#), as a party of "Cephas" existed there.<sup>[2]</sup>

## Death

In the epilogue<sup>[1]</sup> of the Gospel of John, Jesus hints at the death by which Peter would glorify God, [\[Jn. 21:18-19\]](#) saying "...when you are old you will stretch out your hands, and another will dress you and take you where you do not want to go." This is understood as a reference to Peter's crucifixion.<sup>[14]</sup>

According to the 1911 Catholic Encyclopedia, St. Peter labored in Rome during the last portion of his life, and there ended his earthly course by martyrdom.<sup>[18][19]</sup> The death of St. Peter is attested to by [Tertullian](#) at the end of the second century, and by [Origen](#) in *Eusebius*, Church History II.1. Origen says: "Peter was crucified at Rome with his head downwards, as he himself had desired to suffer".<sup>[20]</sup>

## Status

St. Clement of Rome identifies Peter and Paul as the outstanding heroes of the faith.<sup>[2]</sup> Papias reported that the Gospel of Mark was based on Peter's memoirs, a tradition still accepted by some scholars today.<sup>[2]</sup>

## Traditions concerning martyrdom

The mention in the [New Testament](#) of the death of Peter says that Jesus indicated its form by saying: "You will stretch out your hands, and someone else will dress you and lead you where you do not want to go."<sup>[21]</sup> Early church tradition (as indicated below) says Peter probably died by [crucifixion](#) (with arms outstretched) at the time of the [Great Fire of Rome](#) of the year 64. [Margherita Guarducci](#), who led the research leading to the rediscovery of Peter's tomb in its last stages (1963-1968), concludes Peter died on October 13 A.D. 64 during the festivities on the occasion of the "dies imperii" of Emperor Nero. This took place three months after the disastrous fire that destroyed Rome for which the emperor wished to blame the Christians. This "dies imperii" (regnal day anniversary) was an important one, exactly ten years after Nero acceded to the throne, and it was 'as usual' accompanied by much bloodshed. Traditionally, [Roman](#) authorities sentenced him to death by [crucifixion](#). According to the [apocryphal Acts of Peter](#), he was crucified head down. Tradition also locates his burial place where the [Basilica of Saint Peter](#) was later built, directly beneath the Basilica's high altar.

Clement of Rome, in his *Letter to the Corinthians* (Chapter 5), written c. 80-98, speaks of Peter's martyrdom in the following terms: "Let us take the noble examples of our own generation. Through jealousy and envy the greatest and most just pillars of the Church were persecuted, and came even unto death... Peter, through unjust envy, endured not one or two but many labours, and at last, having delivered his testimony, departed unto the place of glory due to him."

The [apocryphal Acts of Peter](#) is also thought to be the source for the tradition about the famous phrase "[Quo vadis, Domine?](#)" (or "Pou Hupageis, Kurie?" which means, "Whither goest Thou, Master?"). According to the story, Peter, fleeing Rome to avoid execution, asked the question of a vision of Jesus, to which Jesus allegedly responded that he was "going to Rome to be crucified again." On hearing this, Peter to decide to return to the city to accept martyrdom. This story is commemorated in an [Annibale Carracci](#) painting. The [Church of Quo Vadis](#), near the [Catacombs of Saint Callistus](#), contains a stone in which Jesus' footprints from this event are supposedly preserved, though this was apparently an [ex-voto](#) from a [pilgrim](#), and indeed a copy of the original, housed in the [Basilica of St Sebastian](#).

The ancient historian [Josephus](#) describes how Roman soldiers would amuse themselves by crucifying criminals in different positions, and it is likely that this would have been known to the author of the *Acts of Peter*. The position attributed to Peter's crucifixion is thus plausible, either as having happened historically or as being an invention by the author of the *Acts of Peter*. Death, after crucifixion head down, is unlikely to be caused by [suffocation](#), the usual cause of death in ordinary crucifixion.

A medieval tradition<sup>[*citation needed*]</sup> was that the Mamertine Prison in Rome is the place where Peter was imprisoned before his execution.

In 1950, human bones were found buried underneath the altar of St. Peter's Basilica. The bones have been claimed by many to have been those of Peter.<sup>[22]</sup> An attempt to contradict these claims was made in 1953 by the excavation of what some believe to be [St Peter's tomb](#) in Jerusalem.<sup>[23]</sup> However along with supposed tomb of Peter bearing his previous name Simon, tombs bearing the names of Jesus, Mary, James, John, and the rest of the apostles were also found at the same

Statue of St. Peter on the south door of St Mary's Church in Aylesbury, United Kingdom

Caravaggio's depiction of the crucifixion of Apostle Peter.



excavation - though all these names were very common among Jews at the time.

In the 1960s, some previously discarded debris from the excavations beneath St Peter's Basilica were re-examined, and the bones of a male person were identified. A forensic examination found them to be a male of about 61 years of age from the first century. This caused Pope Paul VI in 1968 to announce them most likely to be the relics of Apostle Peter. <sup>[24]</sup>

## Connection to Rome

The New Testament says nothing directly about Peter's connection to Rome, but an early Catholic tradition supports such a connection.<sup>[2]</sup>

St. Ignatius of Antioch implies that Peter and Paul had special authority over the Roman church.<sup>[2]</sup> In his *Letter to the Romans* (Ch. 4) of c. 105-110, he tells the Roman Christians: "I do not command you, as Peter and Paul did."

St. **Irenaeus** of Lyons stated definitively that Peter and Paul founded the Roman church. Irenaeus was a disciple of **St. Polycarp of Smyrna**, who was himself a disciple of the St. **John the Apostle**, which puts Irenaeus not far from the authentic teachings of the Apostles. In c. 175-185, he wrote in *Against Heresies* (Book III, Chapter III, paragraphs 2-3):

Since, however, it would be too long to enumerate in such a volume as this the succession of all the churches, we shall confound all those who, in whatever manner, whether through self-satisfaction or vainglory, or through blindness and wicked opinion, assemble other than where it is proper, by pointing out here the successions of the bishops of the greatest and most ancient church known to all, founded and organized at Rome by the two most glorious apostles, Peter and Paul, that church which has the tradition and the faith which comes down to us after having been announced to men by the apostles. With that church, because of its superior origin, all the churches must agree, that is, all the faithful in the whole world, and it is in her that the faithful everywhere have maintained the apostolic tradition.

The blessed apostles, then, having founded and built up the Church, committed into the hands of Linus the office of the episcopate. Of this Linus, Paul makes mention in the Epistles to Timothy. To him succeeded Anacletus; and after him, in the third place from the apostles, Clement was allotted the bishopric. This man, as he had seen the blessed apostles, and had been conversant with them, might be said to have the preaching of the apostles still echoing [in his ears], and their traditions before his eyes. Nor was he alone [in this], for there were many still remaining who had received instructions from the apostles. In the time of this Clement, no small dissension having occurred among the brethren at Corinth, the Church in Rome dispatched a most powerful letter to the Corinthians, exhorting them to peace, renewing their faith, and declaring the tradition which it had lately received from the apostles...

Tertullian also writes: "But if you are near Italy, you have Rome, where authority is at hand for us too. What a happy church that is, on which the apostles poured out their whole doctrine with their blood; where Peter had a passion like that of the Lord, where Paul was crowned with the death of John (the Baptist, by being beheaded)."

**Dionysius of Corinth** also serves as a witness to the tradition.<sup>[2]</sup> He wrote: "You (Pope Soter) have also, by your very admonition, brought together the planting that was made by Peter and Paul at Rome and at Corinth; for both of them alike planted in our Corinth and taught us; and both alike, teaching similarly in Italy, suffered martyrdom at the same time" (Letter to pope Soter A.D. 170, in Eusebius, History of the Church 2:25:8).

Later tradition, first found in Saint Jerome, attributes to Peter a 25-year episcopate (or apostolate) in Rome.<sup>[2]</sup>

## Noncanonical sayings of Peter

Two sayings are attributed to Peter in the apocryphal [Gospel of Thomas](#). In the first, Peter compares Jesus to a "just messenger."<sup>[25]</sup> In the second, Peter asks Jesus to "make Mary leave us, for females don't deserve life,"<sup>[26]</sup> although the verse containing the latter is regarded as a dubious, later addition by most scholars.<sup>[*citation needed*]</sup>

In the [Apocalypse of Peter](#), Peter holds a dialogue with Jesus about the [parable of the fig tree](#) and the fate of [sinners](#).<sup>[27]</sup>

In the *Gospel of Mary*, whose text is largely fragmented, Peter appears to be jealous of "Mary" (probably *Mary Magdalene*). He says to the other disciples, "Did He really speak privately with a woman and not openly to us? Are we to turn about and all listen to her? Did He prefer her to us?"<sup>[28]</sup> In reply to this, *Levi* says "Peter, you have always been hot tempered."<sup>[29]</sup>

Other noncanonical texts that attribute sayings to Peter include the [Secret Book of James](#) and the [Acts of Peter](#).

## Denial of Jesus

In the [Fayyum Fragment](#) of the end of the third century, Jesus predicts that Peter will deny him three times before a cock crows twice (on the following morning). The account is similar to that of the canonical gospels, especially the [Gospel of Mark](#), either an abbreviation of the account in the Synoptics or a source text on which they were based.

## After the death of Jesus

The fragmentary [Gospel of Peter](#), attributed to Peter, contains an account of the death of Jesus differing significantly from the canonical gospels. It contains little information about Peter himself, except that after the discovery of the [empty tomb](#), "I, Simon Peter, and Andrew my brother, took our fishing nets and went to the sea." [30]

## Modern times

Joseph Smith, the founder of Mormonism, recorded in multiple revelations that Peter appeared to him and Oliver Cowdery in 1829 in order to bestow the apostleship and keys of the kingdom as part of a restoration of priesthood authority.<sup>[31][32]</sup>

## Religious interpretations

## Catholic Church

Main articles: [Primacy of Simon Peter](#) and [Primacy of the Roman Pontiff](#)

According to Catholic belief, Peter was the first [Bishop of Rome](#), who, by virtue of his position as successor of St. Peter, is the chief pastor of the whole Church, the Vicar of Christ upon earth.<sup>[33]</sup> Therefore, they consider every [pope](#) to be Peter's successor and the rightful superior of all other bishops. They recognize him as head of the [Catholic Church](#) on Earth, Christ being its Heavenly head. They base this claim on the words of Jesus from two famous Petrine texts, [John 21:15-17](#) which concludes with "Feed my sheep" and is seen by Catholics as promising the spiritual supremacy to Simon Peter and "by charging him with the superintendency of all his sheep, without exception; and consequently of his whole flock, that is, of his own church,"<sup>[33]</sup> and [Matthew 16:17-20](#):

I tell you that you are Peter,<sup>a</sup> and on this rock I will build my church, and the gates of Hades<sup>b</sup> will not overcome it.<sup>c</sup> I will give you the keys of the kingdom of heaven; whatever you bind on earth will be<sup>d</sup> bound in heaven, and whatever you loose on earth will be<sup>e</sup> loosed in heaven."

– Matthew 16:18-20 (NIV)

NIV footnotes a through e (above):

<sup>a</sup>Matthew 16:18 Peter means rock.

<sup>b</sup>Matthew 16:18 Or hell

<sup>c</sup>Matthew 16:18 Or not prove stronger than it

<sup>d</sup>Matthew 16:19 Or have been

<sup>e</sup>Matthew 16:19 Or have been

In reference to Peter's occupation before becoming an Apostle, the popes wear the **Fisherman's Ring**, which bears an

Peter	
<div><div><span><span></span></span></div><div><span>S. Peter GraoVasco1.jpg</span></div></div>	
Papacy began	AD 30?
Papacy ended	AD 64?
Predecessor	New creation
Successor	<span>Linus</span>
Personal details	
Birth name	Simon/Simeon
Born	<span>Bethsaida</span> (traditional)
Died	<span>Circa AD 64</span> <div><span>City of Rome,</span> present day <span>Italy</span> <span><span></span></span> <span>Italy</span> <span><span></span></span></div>



image of the saint casting his nets from a fishing boat. The keys used as a symbol of the pope's authority refer to the "keys of the kingdom of Heaven" promised to Peter.<sup>[Matt. 16:18–19]</sup> The terminology of this "comission" of Peter is unmistakably parallel to the commissioning of Eliakim ben Hilkiah in Isaiah 22:15–23. Peter is often depicted in both Western and Eastern Christian art holding a key or a set of keys.

Feast days

[edit]

The Roman Martyrology assigns 29 June as the *feast day* of both Peter and Paul, without thereby declaring that to be the day of their deaths. St. Augustine of Hippo says in his Sermon 295: "One day is assigned for the celebration of the martyrdom of the two apostles. But those two were one. Although their martyrdom occurred on different days, they were one."

This is also the feast of both Apostles in the calendar of the Eastern Orthodox Church.

In the Roman Rite, the feast of the Chair of Saint Peter is celebrated on 22 February, and the anniversary of the dedication of the two papal basilicas of Saint Peter's and Saint Paul's outside the Walls is held on 18 November.

Before Pope John XXIII's revision in 1960, the Roman Calendar also included on 16 January another feast of the Chair of Saint Peter (denominated the Chair of Saint Peter in Rome, while the February feast was then called that of the Chair of Saint Peter at Antioch), and on 1 August the feast of Saint Peter in Chains.

St. Peter's Basilica

[edit]

*Main article: St. Peter's Basilica*

When, in the early fourth century, the Emperor Constantine I decided to honour Peter with a large basilica, the precise location of Peter's burial was so firmly fixed in the belief of the Christians of Rome that the building had to be erected on a site that involved considerable difficulties, both physical (excavating the slope of the Vatican Hill, while the great church could much more easily have been built on level ground only slightly to the south) and moral and legal (demolishing a cemetery). The focal point of the Basilica, both in its original form and in its later complete reconstruction, is the altar placed over what is held to be the exact place where Peter was buried.

Protestants and other views

[edit]

A major debate between Catholics and Protestants centers on Matthew 16:19 where Jesus tells Peter: "You are *Peter*, and on this *rock* I will build my Church..." Catholics interpret the verse as saying that Jesus would build his church on Peter, the apostle. The traditional Catholic interpretation has been that Jesus told Peter (Rock) that he would build his Church on this Rock (Peter), and that Peter was made the shepherd of the apostolic flock<sup>[Jn 21:15-19]</sup>—hence their assertion of the Primacy of the Roman Pontiff.

Meaning of "Rock"

[edit]

In the original Greek the word translated as "Peter" is Πέτρος (Petros) and that translated as "rock" is πέτρα (petra), two words that, while not identical, give an impression of one of many times when Jesus used a play on words. Furthermore, since Jesus presumably spoke to Peter in their native Aramaic language, he would have used *kepha* in both instances.<sup>[34]</sup> The Peshitta Text and the Old Syriac text use the word "kepha" for both "Peter" and "rock" in Matthew 16:18.<sup>[35]</sup> John 1:42 says Jesus called Simon "Cephas", as does Paul in some letters. He was instructed by Christ to strengthen his brethren, i.e., the apostles.<sup>[Lk 22:31-32]</sup> Peter also had a leadership role in the early Christian church at Jerusalem according to The Acts of the Apostles chapters 1-2, 10-11, and 15.

Early Catholic Latin and Greek writers (such as St. John Chrysostom) considered the "foundation rock" as applying to both Peter personally and his confession of faith (or the faith of his confession) symbolically, as well as seeing Christ's promise to apply more generally to his twelve apostles and the Church at large.<sup>[36]</sup> This "double meaning" interpretation is present in the current Catechism of the Catholic Church.<sup>[37]</sup>

Protestant counterclaims to the Catholic interpretation are largely based on the difference between the Greek words translated "Rock" in the Matthean passage. In classical Attic Greek *petros* generally meant "pebble," while *petra* meant "boulder" or "cliff." Accordingly, taking Peter's name to mean "pebble," they argue that the "rock" in question cannot have been Peter, but something else, either Jesus himself, or the faith in Jesus that Peter had just professed. However, the New Testament was written in Koiné Greek, not Attic Greek, and some authorities say no significant difference existed between the meanings of *petros* and *petra*.



Christ Handing the Keys to St Peter, by Pietro Perugino (1481-82)

However, even though the feminine noun *petra* is translated as *rock* in the phrase "on this rock I will build my church," the word *petra* (πέτρα in Greek) is also used at 1 Cor. 10:4 in describing Jesus Christ, which reads: "They all ate the same spiritual food and drank the same spiritual drink; for they drank from the spiritual rock that accompanied them, and that rock was Christ."

Although Matthew 16 is used as a primary proof-text for the Catholic doctrine of Papal supremacy, Protestant scholars say that prior to the Reformation of the sixteenth century, Matthew 16 was very rarely used to support papal claims. Their position is that most of the early and medieval Church interpreted the 'rock' as being a reference either to Christ or to Peter's faith, not Peter himself. They understand Jesus' remark to have been his affirmation of Peter's testimony that Jesus was the Son of God.<sup>[38]</sup>

Another rebuttal of the Catholic position is that if *Peter* really means *the Rock* which makes him the chief of Apostles, it would contradict Bible's teaching in Ephesians 2:20 which says that the church's foundation is the apostles and prophets, not Peter alone. They posit that the meaning of Matthew 16:18 is that Jesus uses a play on words with Peter's name to say that the confession he had just made is the rock on which the church is built.<sup>[39]</sup>

Other theologically conservative Christians, including Confessional Lutherans, also rebut comments made by Karl Keating and D.A. Carso who claim that there is no distinction between the words *petros* and *petra* in Koine Greek. The Lutheran theologians state that the dictionaries of Koine/NT Greek, including the authoritative<sup>[40]</sup> Bauer-Danker-Armdt-Gingrich Lexicon, indeed list

both words and the passages that give different meanings for each. The Lutheran theologians further note that:

We honor Peter and in fact some of our churches are named after him, but he was not the first pope, nor was he Roman Catholic. If you read his first letter, you will see that he did not teach a Roman hierarchy, but that all Christians are royal priests. The same keys given to Peter in Matthew 16 are given to the whole church of believers in Matthew 18<sup>[41]</sup>

Partial Protestant support

[edit]

Partial support for the Catholic position comes from one of Protestantism's most distinguished Church historians, Oscar Cullmann, a Lutheran theologian. He disagrees with Luther and the Protestant reformers who held that by "rock" Christ did not mean Peter, but meant either himself or the faith of His followers. He believes the meaning of the original Aramaic is very clear: that "Kepha" was the Aramaic word for "rock", and that it was also the name by which Christ called Peter.<sup>[42]</sup>

Yet, Cullmann sharply rejects the Catholic claim that Peter began the papal succession. He writes: "In the life of Peter there is no starting point for a chain of succession to the leadership of the church at large." While he believes the Matthew text is entirely valid and is in no way spurious, he says it cannot be used as "warrant of the papal succession."<sup>[42]</sup>

Cullmann concludes that while Peter was the original head of the apostles, Peter was not the founder of any visible church succession.<sup>[42]</sup>

There are other Protestant scholars who also partially defend the historical Catholic position about "Rock."<sup>[43]</sup> Taking a somewhat different approach from Cullmann, they point out that the Gospel of Matthew was not written in the classical Attic form of Greek, but in the Hellenistic Koine dialect in which there is no distinction in meaning between *petros* and *petra*. Moreover, even in Attic Greek, in which the regular meaning of *petros* was a smallish "stone," there are instances of its use to refer to larger rocks, as in Sophocles, Oedipus at Colonus v. 1595, where *petros* refers to a boulder used as a landmark, obviously something more than a pebble. In any case, a *petros/petra* distinction is irrelevant considering the Aramaic language in which the phrase might well have been spoken. In Greek, of any period, the feminine noun *petra* could not be used as the given name of a male, which may explain the use of *Petros* as the Greek word with which to translate Aramaic *Kepha*.<sup>[34]</sup>

Yet, still other Protestant scholars believe that Jesus in fact *did* mean to single out Peter as the very rock which he will build upon, but that the passage does



nothing to indicate a continued succession of Peter's implied position. They assert that Matthew uses the demonstrative pronoun *taute*, which allegedly means "this very" or *this same*, when he refers to the rock on which Jesus' church will be built. He also uses the Greek word for "and", *kai*. It is alleged that when a demonstrative pronoun is used with *kai*, the pronoun refers back to the preceding noun. The second rock Jesus refers to must then be the same rock as the first one; and if Peter is the first rock he must also be the second.<sup>[44]</sup>

Eastern Orthodox

[\[edit\]](#)

The [Eastern Orthodox Church](#) regards Apostle Peter, together with Apostle Paul, as "Preeminent Apostles". Another title used for Peter is *Coryphaeus*, which could be translated as "Choir-director", or lead singer.<sup>[45]</sup> The church recognizes Apostle Peter's leadership role in the [early church](#), especially in the very early days at Jerusalem, but does not consider him to have had any "princely" role over his fellow Apostles.

The New Testament is not seen by the Orthodox as supporting any extraordinary authority for Peter with regard to faith or morals. The Orthodox also hold that Peter did not act as leader at the [Council of Jerusalem](#), but as merely one of a number who spoke. The final decision regarding the non-necessity of [circumcision](#) (and certain prohibitions) was spelled out by [James, the Brother of the Lord](#) (though Catholics hold James merely reiterated and fleshed out what Peter had said, regarding the latter's earlier divine revelation regarding the inclusion of Gentiles).

Eastern and Oriental Orthodox do not recognize the Bishop of Rome as the successor of St. Peter but the [Ecumenical Patriarch of Constantinople](#) sends a delegation each year to Rome to participate in the celebration of the feast of Sts. Peter and Paul. In the [Ravenna Document of 13 October 2007](#), the representatives of the [Eastern Orthodox Church](#) agreed that "Rome, as the Church that 'presides in love' according to the phrase of St. Ignatius of Antioch (To the Romans, Prologue), occupied the first place in the *taxís*, and that the bishop of Rome was therefore the *protos* among the patriarchs, if the Papacy unites with the Orthodox Church. They disagree, however, on the interpretation of the historical evidence from this era regarding the prerogatives of the bishop of Rome as *protos*, a matter that was already understood in different ways in the first millennium."

With regard to Jesus' words to Peter, "Thou art Peter and upon this rock I will build my church", the Orthodox hold Christ is referring to the confession of faith, *not* the person of Peter as that upon which he will build the church. This is allegedly shown by the fact that the original Greek uses the feminine demonstrative pronoun when he says "upon this rock" (ταύτη τῇ πέτρῃ); whereas, grammatically, if he had been referring to Peter, he would allegedly have used the masculine.<sup>[46]</sup> This "gender distinction" argument is also held by some Protestants.

The Orthodox also consider that [St. Linus](#), not Peter, was the first [Bishop of Rome](#),<sup>[citation needed]</sup>, as do Catholics who define "pope" as "successor of Saint Peter".

Feast days

[\[edit\]](#)

In the Orthodox [Daily Office](#) every Thursday throughout the year is dedicated to the Holy Apostles, including St. Peter. There are also two [feast days](#) in the year which are dedicated to him:

- **June 29, Feast of Saints Peter and Paul**—This is a major feast day and is preceded by a period of Lenten fasting known as the [Apostles' Fast](#)
- **January 16**, Veneration of the Precious Chains of the Holy and All-Glorious Apostle Peter—commemorating both the chains which [Acts 12:1-11](#) says miraculously fell from him, and the chains in which he was held before his [martyrdom](#) by [Nero](#).

Syriac Orthodox Church

[\[edit\]](#)

The Fathers of the Syriac Orthodox Church tried to give a theological interpretation to the primacy of Apostle Peter. They were fully convinced of the unique office of Peter in the primitive Christian community. [Ephrem](#), [Aphrahat](#) and [Marutha](#) who were supposed to be the best exponents of the early [Syriac tradition](#) unequivocally acknowledge the office of Peter.

The Syriac Fathers following the rabbinic tradition call Jesus "[Kepha](#)" for they see "rock" in the Old Testament as a messianic Symbol. When Christ gave his own name "Kepha" to Simon he was giving him participation in the person and office of Christ. Christ who is the Kepha and shepherd made Simon the chief shepherd in his place and gave him the very name Kepha and said that on Kepha he would build the Church. [Aphrahat](#) shared the common Syriac tradition. For him Kepha is in fact another name of Jesus, and Simon was given the right to share the name. The person who receives somebody else's name also obtains the rights of the person who bestows the name. Aphrahat makes the stone taken from Jordan a type of Peter. He says Jesus son of Nun set up the stones for a witness in Israel; Jesus our Saviour called Simon Kepha Sariito and set him as the faithful witness among nations.

Again he says in his commentary on [Deuteronomy](#) that [Moses](#) brought forth water from "rock" (Kepha) for the people and Jesus sent Simon Kepha to carry his teachings among nations. Our Lord accepted him and made him the foundation of the Church and called him [Kepha](#). When he speaks about transfiguration of Christ he calls him [Simon Peter](#), the foundation of the Church. Ephrem also shared the same view. In Armenian version of [De Virginitate](#) records Peter the Rock shunned honour Who was the head of the Apostles. In a *mimro* of Efreem found in Holy Week Liturgy points to the importance of Peter.

Both [Aphrahat](#) and [Ephrem](#) represent the authentic tradition of the Syrian Church. The different orders of liturgies used for sanctification of Church building, marriage, ordination etc. reveal that the primacy of Peter is a part of living faith of the Church. <sup>[47]</sup>

Seventh Day Adventist understanding

[\[edit\]](#)

When Christ on the eve of His betrayal forewarned His disciples, "All ye shall be offended because of Me this night," Peter confidently declared, "Although all shall be offended, yet will not I."<sup>[[Mk 14:27,29](#)]</sup> Self-confidence misled him, but in a few short hours the test came, and with cursing and swearing he denied his Lord, then the crowing of the cock reminded him of the words of Christ. Now his self-confidence was gone. Never again were the old boastful assertions repeated. Christ after His resurrection thrice tested Peter. "Simon, son of Jonas," He said, "lovest thou Me more than these?" Peter did not now exalt himself above his brethren. He appealed to the One who could read His heart. "Lord," he said, "Thou knowest all things; Thou knowest that I love Thee."<sup>[[Jn. 21:15,17](#)]</sup> Then he received his commission. Christ bade him feed the sheep and the lambs. Christ gave to Peter the strongest proof of confidence in his restoration. Though Peter had grievously sinned, he was not forsaken. The words of Christ were written upon his soul, "I have prayed for thee, that thy faith fail not."<sup>[[Lk 22:32](#)]</sup> When Jesus asked, "Whom do men say that I the Son of man am?"<sup>[[Mk 8:27](#)]</sup> Sadly the disciples were forced to acknowledge that Israel had failed to recognize their Messiah. "But whom say ye that I am?"<sup>[[Mk 8:29](#)]</sup> Peter answered, "Thou art the Christ, the Son of the living God." Peter had expressed the faith of the twelve. Jesus answered Peter, saying, "Blessed art thou, Simon Bar-jona: for flesh and blood hath not revealed it unto thee, but My Father which is in heaven." The truth which Peter had confessed is the foundation of the believer's faith. "The secret of the Lord is with them that fear Him;" and the fact that Peter discerned the glory of Christ was evidence that he had been "taught of God."<sup>[[Ps 25:14](#)]</sup> <sup>[[Jn. 6:45](#)]</sup> Jesus continued: "I say also unto thee, That thou art Peter, and upon this rock I will build My church; and the gates of hell shall not prevail against it." Peter was not the rock upon which the church was founded. The gates of hell did prevail against him when he denied his Lord with cursing and swearing. Peter himself, writing by inspiration, applies this prophecy to Jesus. He says, "If ye have tasted that the Lord is gracious: unto whom coming, a living stone, rejected indeed of men, but with God elect, precious, ye also, as living stones, are built up a spiritual house."<sup>[[1 Pet. 2:3-5](#)]</sup> "Other foundation can no man lay than that is laid, which is Jesus Christ."<sup>[[1 Cor. 3:11](#)]</sup> "The keys of the kingdom of heaven"<sup>[[Mt. 16:19](#)]</sup> are the words of Christ. All the words of Holy Scripture are His, and are here included. These words have power to open and to shut heaven. Christ had accepted Peter's acknowledgment of Him as the Son of God; and now His words pointing to His suffering and death seemed incomprehensible. Peter could not keep silent. He laid hold upon his Master, as if to draw Him back from His impending doom, exclaiming, "Be it far from Thee, Lord: this shall not be unto Thee."<sup>[[Matt. 16:22](#)]</sup> Peter did not desire to see the cross in the work of Christ. The impression which his words would make was directly opposed to that which Christ desired to make on the minds of His followers, and the Saviour was moved to utter one of the sternest rebuke that ever fell from His lips: "Get thee behind Me, Satan: thou art an offense unto Me: for thou savorest not the things that be of God, but those that be of men."<sup>[[Mt. 16:23](#)]</sup> Satan was trying to discourage Jesus, and turn Him from His mission; But the Savior heeded it not; His thought was for His disciple. Satan had interposed between Peter and his Master, that the heart of the disciple might not be touched at the vision of Christ's humiliation for him. The words of Christ were spoken, not to Peter, but to the one who was trying to separate him from his Redeemer. "Get thee behind Me, Satan." No longer interpose between Me and My erring servant. Let Me come face to face with Peter, that I may reveal to him the mystery of My love.

quoted from 'Acts of the Apostles' by Ellen White





## New Apostolic Church

[[edit](#)]

The [New Apostolic Church](#), who believes in the re-established Apostle ministry, sees Peter as the first [Chief Apostle](#).

## Latter Day Saint movement

[[edit](#)]

The [Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints](#) (LDS Church or "[Mormons](#)") along with other sects of the [Latter Day Saint movement](#) believe that Peter was the first leader of the early Christian church, but reject papal succession. In interpreting [Matthew 16:13–19](#) the LDS Church has stated, "The words then addressed to him, 'Thou art Peter, and upon this rock I will build my church,' have been made the foundation of the papal claims. But it is the Godhead of Christ, which Peter had just confessed, that is the true keystone of the Church."<sup>[48]</sup> Latter-day saints believe that Peter, [James](#), and [John](#). came from heaven and conferred the keys of the [Melchizedek Priesthood](#) upon [Joseph Smith](#) and [Oliver Cowdery](#) in 1829, near [Harmony Township, Susquehanna County, Pennsylvania](#) as part of the [restoration of priesthood authority](#).<sup>[49]</sup>

## Afro-American syncretism

[[edit](#)]

In the Cuban [Santería](#) and [Palo Mayombe](#), he has been syncretized with [Ogún](#).

## Jewish folklore

[[edit](#)]

*Main article: [Apostle Peter and Judaism](#)*

According to Jewish folklore ([Toledot Yeshu](#) narrative), St. Peter (Shimeon Kepha Ha-Tzadik) had a pristine reputation as a greatly learned and holy man.

## Writings

Traditionally, two canonical epistles (1 & 2 Peter) and several apocryphal works have been attributed to Peter.

## New Testament

[[edit](#)]

The [New Testament](#) includes two letters (*epistles*) ascribed to Peter. Both demonstrate a high quality of cultured and urban Greek, at odds with the linguistic skill that would ordinarily be expected of an [Aramaic](#)-speaking fisherman, who would have learned Greek as a second or third language. However, the author of the first epistle explicitly claims to be using a secretary (see below), and this explanation would allow for discrepancies in style without entailing a different source. The textual features of these two epistles are such that a majority of scholars doubt that they were written by the same hand. This means at the most that Peter could not have authored both, or at the least that he used a different secretary for each letter. Some scholars argue that theological differences imply different sources, and point to the lack of references to 2 Peter among the early Church Fathers.

Of the two epistles, the [first epistle](#) is considered the earlier. A number of scholars have argued that the textual discrepancies with what would be expected of the biblical Peter are due to it having been written with the help of a secretary or as an [amanuensis](#). Indeed in the first epistle the use of a secretary is clearly described: "By Silvanus, a faithful brother unto you, as I suppose, I have written briefly, exhorting, and testifying that this is the true grace of God wherein ye stand".<sup>[1 Pet. 5:12]</sup> Thus, in regards to at least the first epistle, the claims that Peter would have written Greek poorly seem irrelevant. The references to [persecution of Christians](#), which only began under [Nero](#), cause most scholars to date the text to at least 80, which would require Peter to have survived to an age that was, at that time, extremely old, and almost never reached, particularly by common fishermen. However, the Roman historian [Tacitus](#) and the biographer [Suetonius](#) both record that Nero's persecution of Christians began immediately after the fire that burned Rome in 64. Such a date, which is in accord with Christian tradition, especially Eusebius (*History* book 2, 24.1), would not have Peter at an improbable age upon his death. On the other hand, many scholars consider this in reference to the persecution of Christians in Asia Minor during the reign of the emperor [Domitian](#) (81-96).

In the salutation of the First Epistle of Peter, the writer refers to the diaspora, which did not occur until 136: Peter, an apostle of Jesus Christ, to God's elect, strangers in the world, scattered throughout Pontus, Galatia, Cappadocia, Asia and Bithynia, who have been chosen according to the foreknowledge of God the Father, through the sanctifying work of the Spirit, for obedience to Jesus Christ and sprinkling by his blood: Grace and peace be yours in abundance.

The [Second Epistle of Peter](#), on the other hand, appears to have been copied, in part, from the [Epistle of Jude](#), and some modern scholars date its composition as late as c. 150. Some scholars argue the opposite, that the Epistle of Jude copied 2 Peter, while others contend an early date for Jude and thus observe that an early date is not incompatible with the text. Many scholars have noted the similarities between the apocryphal second pseudo-[Epistle of Clement](#) (2nd century) and 2 Peter. Second Peter may be earlier than 150, there are a few possible references to it that date back to the first century or early second century, e.g., [1 Clement](#) written in c. AD 96, and the later church historian [Eusebius](#) claimed that [Origen](#) had made reference to the epistle before 250. Even in early times there was controversy over its authorship, and 2 Peter was often not included in the [Biblical Canon](#); it was only in the 4th century that it gained a firm foothold in the New Testament, in a series of synods. In the east the [Syrian Orthodox Church](#) still did not admit it into the canon until the 6th century.

Traditionally, the [Gospel of Mark](#) was said to have been written by a person named *John Mark*, and that this person was an assistant to Peter, hence its content was traditionally seen as the closest to Peter's viewpoint. According to [Eusebius's Ecclesiastical History](#), [Papias](#) recorded this belief from [John the Presbyter](#):

*Mark having become the interpreter of Peter, wrote down accurately whatsoever he remembered. It was not, however, in exact order that he related the sayings or deeds of Christ. For he neither heard the Lord nor accompanied Him. But afterwards, as I said, he accompanied Peter, who accommodated his instructions to the necessities [of his hearers], but with no intention of giving a normal or chronological narrative of the Lord's sayings. Wherefore Mark made no mistake in thus writing some things as he remembered them. For of one thing he took especial care, not to omit anything he had heard, and not to put anything fictional into the statements.*—Eusebius, Ecclesiastical History, 3.39.14–16

Also Irenaeus wrote about this tradition:

*After their (Peter and Paul's) passing, Mark also, the disciple and interpreter of Peter, transmitted to us in writing the things preached by Peter.* (Irenaeus, *Against Heresies*, III. 1.2.; quoted by Eusebius in *Ecclesiastical History*, book 5, 7.6)

Based on these quotes, and on the Christian tradition, the information in Mark's Gospel about St. Peter would be based on eyewitness material. It should be noted, however, that some scholars (for differing reasons) dispute the attribution of the Gospel of Mark to its traditional author. The gospel itself is [anonymous](#), and the above passages are the oldest surviving written testimony to its authorship.

## Pseudepigrapha and apocrypha

[[edit](#)]

There are also a number of other [apocryphal](#) writings that have been either attributed to or written about St. Peter. They were from antiquity regarded as [pseudepigrapha](#).<sup>[*citation needed*]</sup> These include:

- [Gospel of Peter](#), a [Docetic](#) narrative that has survived in part
- [Acts of Peter](#)
- [Acts of Peter and Andrew](#)
- [Acts of Peter and Paul](#)
- [Acts of Peter and the Twelve](#)
- [Gnostic Apocalypse of Peter](#)



Bronze statue on the [LDS Church's Temple Square](#) ([Salt Lake City, Utah, USA](#)) depicting Peter, James, and John conferring the [Melchizedek priesthood](#) in 1829 on [Joseph Smith](#) and [Oliver Cowdery](#)



Saint Peter statue, Israel



A 6th-century encaustic icon from [Saint Catherine's Monastery, Mount Sinai](#).













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navigation

- [Main page](#)
- [Contents](#)
- [Featured content](#)
- [Current events](#)
- [Random article](#)

search

**Go** Search

interaction

- [About Wikipedia](#)
- [Community portal](#)
- [Recent changes](#)
- [Contact Wikipedia](#)
- [Donate to Wikipedia](#)
- [Help](#)

toolbox

- [What links here](#)
- [Related changes](#)
- [Upload file](#)
- [Special pages](#)
- [Printable version](#)
- [Permanent link](#)
- [Cite this page](#)

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- Česky
- Dansk
- Deutsch
- Eesti
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- فزسی
- Français
- 한국어
- Hrvatski
- Bahasa Indonesia
- Interlingua
- Italiano
- עברית
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- Kiswahili
- Latina
- Lietuvių
- Magyar
- മലയാളം
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- 日本語
- Norsk (bokmål)
- Norsk (nynorsk)
- Polski
- Português
- Română
- Русский
- Scots
- Simple English
- Slovenčina
- Slovenščina
- Орыска / Srpski
- Srpskohrvatski /
- Српскохрватски
- Suomi
- Svenska
- Українська
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[article](#) [discussion](#) [edit this page](#) [history](#)

## Septuagint

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The **Septuagint** (pronounced ˈsɛptu.ɛdʒɪnt/), or simply "**LXX**", referred to in critical works by the abbreviation <sup>[1]</sup> is the **Koine Greek** version of the **Hebrew Bible**, translated in stages between the **3rd** and **1st centuries BCE** in **Alexandria**.<sup>[2]</sup> It was begun by the third century BCE and completed before 132 BCE.<sup>[3]</sup>

It is the oldest of several ancient translations of the Hebrew Bible into *Greek*, *lingua franca* of the eastern *Mediterranean Basin* from the time of *Alexander the Great* (356-323 BCE).

The Septuagint was held in great respect in ancient times; [Philo](#) and [Josephus](#) (associated with [Hellenistic Judaism](#)) ascribed divine inspiration to its authors.<sup>[4]</sup> Besides the [Old Latin versions](#), the LXX is also the basis for the [Slavonic](#), the [Syriac](#), [Old Armenian](#), [Old Georgian](#) and [Coptic](#) versions of the [Old Testament](#).<sup>[5]</sup> Of significance for all [Christians](#) and for Bible scholars, the LXX is quoted by the [New Testament](#) and by the [Apostolic Fathers](#).

## Contents [\[hide\]](#)

- 1 Creation of the Septuagint
- 2 Naming and designation
- 3 Textual history
  - 3.1 Relationship between the Septuagint and the Masoretic text
  - 3.2 Dead Sea Scrolls
- 4 Use of the Septuagint
  - 4.1 Jewish use
  - 4.2 Christian use
  - 4.3 Apocrypha
- 5 Language of the Septuagint
- 6 Books of the Septuagint
  - 6.1 Extracts from Theodotion
- 7 Printed editions
- 8 English Translations of the Septuagint
- 9 International Septuagint Day
- 10 Defining Septuagint
- 11 Table of books
- 12 See also
- 13 References
- 14 Other references
- 15 External links
  - 15.1 General
  - 15.2 Texts and translations
  - 15.3 The LXX and the NT

## Creation of the Septuagint

On pain of death, Jewish scholars (see also [Hellenistic Judaism](#)) first translated the [Torah](#) into [Koine Greek](#) in the third century BCE<sup>[6]</sup>. According to the record in the [Talmud](#),

\*King **Ptolemy** once gathered 72 Elders. He placed them in 72 chambers, each of them in a separate one, without revealing to them why they were summoned. He entered each one's room and said: 'Write for me the **Torah** of **Moshe**, your teacher.' God put it in the heart of each one to translate identically as all the others did!<sup>[7]</sup>

Further books were translated over the next two centuries. It is not altogether clear which was translated when, or where; some may even have been translated twice, into different versions, and then revised.<sup>[8]</sup> The quality and style of the different translators also varied considerably from book to book, from the **literal** to **paraphrasing** to interpretative. According to one assessment "the **Pentateuch** is reasonably well translated, but the rest of the books, especially the **poetical books**, are often very poorly done and even contain sheer absurdities".<sup>[9]</sup>

As the work of translation progressed gradually, and new books were added to the collection, the compass of the Greek Bible came to be somewhat indefinite. The **Pentateuch** always maintained its pre-eminence as the basis of the **canon**; but the prophetic collection (out of which the **New'im** were selected) changed its aspect by having various **hagiographa** incorporated into it. Some of the newer works, those called *anagignoskomena* in Greek, are not included in the **Jewish canon**. Among these books are **Maccabees** and the **Wisdom of Ben Sira**. Also, the Septuagint version of some works, like **Daniel** and **Esther**, are longer than those in the **Masoretic Text**.<sup>[10]</sup> Some of the later books (**Wisdom of Solomon**, **2 Maccabees**, and others) apparently were composed in Greek.<sup>[11]</sup>

The authority of the larger group of "writings", out of which the *ketuvim* were selected, had not yet been determined, although some sort of selective process must have been employed because the Septuagint did not include other well-known Jewish documents such as *Enoch* or *Jubilees* or other writings that are now part of the *Pseudepigrapha*. It is not known what principles were used to determine the contents of the Septuagint beyond the "*Law* and the *Prophets*", a phrase used several times in the *New Testament*.

## Naming and designation

The Septuagint derives its name from **Latin** *Interpretatio septuaginta virorum*, (Greek: ἡ μετάφρασις τῶν ἑβδομήκοντα, *hē metáphrasis tōn hebdomēkonta*), "translation of the seventy interpreters".<sup>[2]</sup>

As stated in the Tractate [Megillah](#) of the [Babylonian Talmud](#) (pages 9a-9b), and later narrated by [Philo of Alexandria](#), 72 Jewish translators were used to complete the translation while kept in separate chambers. They all produced identical versions of the text in seventy-two days. This story underlines the fact that Jews in antiquity wished to present the translation as authoritative in order to prevent [criticism](#) by non-Jews based on divergent translations.<sup>[4]</sup> The text in Megillah identifies fifteen specific unusual translations made by the scholars. Only two of these translations are found in the extant LXX

The word *septuaginta*<sup>[12]</sup> means "seventy" in Latin (hence the abbreviation **LXX**), based on the Jewish source for the translation event that refers to the account, also found in the **pseudepigraphic Letter of Aristeas** which repeats the story of how seventy-two Jewish scholars were forced<sup>[13]</sup> by the Greek King of Egypt **Ptolemy II Philadelphus** in the 3rd century BCE to translate the **Torah** (or **Pentateuch**) from **Biblical Hebrew** into Greek for inclusion in the **Library of Alexandria**.<sup>[4]</sup> In Hebrew it is known as Targum Shvivim - "the translation of the 70".

## Textual history

Modern scholarship holds that the LW was written during the 2nd through 1st centuries

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The Septuagint: A column of [uncial](#) text from [1 Esdras](#) in the [Codex Vaticanus](#), the basis of Sir Lancelot Charles Lee Brenton's Greek edition and [English translation](#).

[edit]

[edit]

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## Biblical canon and books

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Chapters & verses  
Apocrypha: Jewish · OT · NT

## Development and authorship

- Jewish Canon
- Old Testament canon
- New Testament canon





The inter-relationship between various significant ancient manuscripts of the Old Testament (some identified by their siglum). LXX here denotes the original septuagint.

modern scholarship holds that the LXX was written during the 3rd through 1st centuries BCE. But nearly all attempts at dating specific books, with the exception of the **Pentateuch** (early- to mid-3rd century BCE), are tentative and without consensus.<sup>[4]</sup> Later Jewish revisions and **recensions** of the Greek against the Hebrew are well attested, the most famous of which include *the Three*: **Aquila** (AD 128), **Symmachus**, and **Theodotion**. These three, to varying degrees, are more literal renderings of their contemporary Hebrew scriptures as compared to the **Old Greek**. Modern scholars consider one or more of the 'three' to be totally new Greek versions of the Hebrew Bible.<sup>[14]</sup>

Around **AD 235**, **Origen**, a Christian scholar in **Alexandria**, completed the **Hexapla**, a comprehensive comparison of the ancient versions and Hebrew text side-by-side in six columns, with diacritical markings (a.k.a. "editor's marks", "critical signs" or "Aristarchian signs"). Much of this work was lost, but several compilations of the fragments are available. In the first column was the contemporary Hebrew, in the second a Greek transliteration of it, then the newer Greek versions each in their own columns. Origen also kept a column for the Old Greek (the Septuagint) and next to it was a critical apparatus combining readings from all the Greek versions with diacritical marks indicating to which version each line (Gr. στίχος) belonged.<sup>[15]</sup> Perhaps the voluminous Hexapla was never copied in its entirety, but Origen's combined text ("the fifth column") was copied frequently, eventually without the editing marks, and the older uncombined text of the LXX was neglected. Thus this combined text became the first major Christian recension of the LXX, often called the *Hexaplar recension*. In the century following Origen, two other major recensions were identified by **Jerome**, who attributed these to **Lucian** and **Hesychius**.<sup>[4]</sup>

The oldest manuscripts of the LXX include 2nd century BCE fragments of Leviticus and Deuteronomy (Rahlfs nos. 801, 819, and 957), and 1st century BCE fragments of Genesis, Exodus, Leviticus, Numbers, Deuteronomy, and the Minor Prophets (Rahlfs nos. 802, 803, 805, 848, 942, and 943). Relatively complete manuscripts of the LXX postdate the Hexaplar recension and include the **Codex Vaticanus** and the **Codex Sinaiticus** of the 4th century and the **Codex Alexandrinus** of the 5th century. These are indeed the oldest surviving nearly-complete manuscripts of the Old Testament in any language; the oldest extant complete Hebrew texts date some 600 years later, from the first half of the 10th century.<sup>[5][16]</sup> While there are differences between these three codices, scholarly consensus today holds that one LXX—that is, the original pre-Christian translation—underlies all three. The various Jewish and later Christian revisions and recensions are largely responsible for the divergence of the codices.<sup>[4]</sup>

Relationship between the Septuagint and the Masoretic text

[edit]

The sources of the many differences between the Septuagint and the **Masoretic text** have long been discussed by scholars. The most widely accepted view today is that the original Septuagint provided a reasonably accurate record of an early Semitic textual variant, now lost, that differed from ancestors of the Masoretic text. Ancient scholars, however, had no reason to suspect such a possibility. **Early Christians**—who were largely unfamiliar with Hebrew texts, and were thus only made aware of the differences through the newer Greek versions—tended to dismiss the differences as a product of uninspired translation of the Hebrew in these new versions. Following the **Renaissance**, a common opinion among some humanists was that the LXX translators made a poor translation from the Hebrew and that the LXX became more corrupt with time.

These issues notwithstanding, the text of the LXX is generally close to that of the Masoretes. For example, Genesis 4:1-6 is identical in both the LXX and the Masoretic Text. Likewise, Genesis 4:8 to the end of the chapter is the same. There is only one noticeable difference in that chapter, at 4:7, to wit:

Genesis 4:7, LXX (NETS)	Genesis 4:7, Masoretic (NRSV)
If you offer correctly but do not divide correctly, have you not sinned? Be still; his recourse is to you, and you will rule over him.	If you do well, will you not be accepted? And if you do not do well, sin is lurking at the door; its desire is for you, but you must master it.

This instance illustrates the complexity of assessing differences between the LXX and the Masoretic Text. Despite the striking divergence of meaning here between the two, nearly identical consonantal Hebrew source texts can be reconstructed. The readily apparent semantic differences result from alternative strategies for interpreting the difficult verse and relate to differences in vowelization and punctuation of the consonantal text.

The differences between the LXX and the MT thus fall into four categories.<sup>[17]</sup>

- Different Hebrew sources for the MT and the LXX.* Evidence of this can be found throughout the Old Testament. Most obvious are major differences in Jeremiah and Job, where the LXX is much shorter and chapters appear in different order than in the MT, and Esther where almost one third of the verses in the LXX text have no parallel in the MT. A more subtle example may be found in Isaiah 36:11; the meaning ultimately remains the same, but the choice of words evidences a different text. The MT reads "...*al tedaber yehudit be'-ozne ha'am al ha-homa*" [speak not the Judean language in the ears of (or — which can be heard by) the people on the wall]. The same verse in the LXX reads according to the translation of Brenton "and speak not to us in the Jewish tongue: and wherefore speakest thou in the ears of the men on the wall." The MT reads "people" where the LXX reads "men". This difference is very minor and does not affect the meaning of the verse. Scholars at one time had used discrepancies such as this to claim that the LXX was a poor translation of the Hebrew original. With the discovery of the Dead Sea Scrolls, variant Hebrew texts of the Bible were found. In fact this verse is found in Qumran (1QIsaa) where the Hebrew word "haanashim" (the men) is found in place of "haam" (the people). This discovery, and others like it, showed that even seemingly minor differences of translation could be the result of variant Hebrew source texts.
- Differences in interpretation* stemming from the same Hebrew text. A good example is Genesis 4.7, shown above.
- Differences as a result of idiomatic translation issues* (i.e. a Hebrew idiom may not easily translate into Greek, thus some difference is intentionally or unintentionally imparted). For example, in Psalm 47:10 the MT reads "The shields of the earth belong to God". The LXX reads "To God are the mighty ones of the earth." The metaphor "shields" would not have made much sense to a Greek speaker; thus the words "mighty ones" are substituted in order to retain the original meaning.
- Transmission changes in Hebrew or Greek* (Diverging revisionary/recensional changes and copyist errors)

Dead Sea Scrolls

[edit]

The discovery of many Biblical fragments in the **Dead Sea scrolls** that agree with the Septuagint rather than the Masoretic Text proved that many of the variants in Greek were also present in early Semitic manuscripts.<sup>[18]</sup>

Many of the oldest Biblical fragments among the **Dead Sea Scrolls**, particularly those in **Aramaic**, correspond more closely with the LXX than with the Masoretic text (although the majority of these variations are extremely minor, e.g. grammatical changes, spelling differences or missing words, and do not affect the meaning of sentences and paragraphs).<sup>[2][19][20]</sup> This confirms the scholarly consensus that the LXX represents a separate Hebrew-text tradition from that which was later standardized as the Masoretic text.<sup>[2][21]</sup>

Use of the Septuagint

[edit]

Jewish use

[edit]

In the 3rd century BCE, most Jewish communities were located in the Hellenistic world where Greek was the **lingua franca**. It is believed that the LXX was produced because many Jews outside of **Judea** needed a Greek version of the scripture for use during **synagogue** readings<sup>[22][23]</sup> or for religious study.<sup>[24]</sup> Some theorise that **Hellenistic Jews** intended the septuagint as a contribution to **Hellenistic culture**.<sup>[4]</sup> Alexandria held the greatest diaspora Jewish community of the age and was also

Mosaic authorship
Pauline epistles
Johannine works
Petrine epistles
Translations and manuscripts
Septuagint · Samaritan Pentateuch
Dead Sea scrolls · Masoretic text
Targums · Peshitta
Vetus Latina · Vulgate
Gothic Bible · Luther Bible
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Biblical studies
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Higher criticism
Textual criticism
Canonical criticism
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a great center of Greek letters. Alexandria is thus likely the site of LXX authorship, a notion supported by the legend of Ptolemy and the 72 scholars.<sup>[25]</sup> The Septuagint enjoyed widespread use in the Hellenistic Jewish diaspora and even in Jerusalem, which had become a rather cosmopolitan (and therefore Greek-speaking) town. Both **Philo** and **Josephus** show a reliance on the Septuagint in their citations of Jewish scripture.

Starting approximately in the 2nd century AD (see also **Council of Jamnia**), several factors led most Jews to abandon use of the LXX. The earliest **gentile** Christians of necessity used the LXX, as it was at the time the only Greek version of the bible, and most, if not all, of these early non-Jewish Christians could not read Hebrew. The association of the LXX with a rival religion may have rendered it suspect in the eyes of the newer generation of Jews and Jewish scholars.<sup>[5]</sup> Perhaps more importantly, the Greek language—and therefore the Greek Bible—declined among Jews after most of them fled from the Greek-speaking eastern **Roman Empire** into the Aramaic-speaking **Persian Empire** when **Jerusalem was destroyed by the Romans**. Instead, Jews used Hebrew/Aramaic **Targum** manuscripts later compiled by the **Masoretes**; and authoritative Aramaic translations, such as those of **Onkelos** and **Rabbi Yonathan ben Uziel**.<sup>[26]</sup>

What was perhaps most significant for the LXX, as distinct from other Greek versions, was that the LXX began to lose Jewish sanction after differences between it and contemporary Hebrew scriptures were discovered. Even Greek-speaking Jews — such as those remaining in Palestine — tended less to the LXX, preferring other Jewish versions in Greek, such as that of **Aquila**, which seemed to be more concordant with contemporary Hebrew texts.<sup>[5]</sup> While Jews have not used the LXX in worship or religious study since the second century AD, recent scholarship has brought renewed interest in it in Judaic Studies.

**Christian use**[\[edit\]](#)

The **Early Christian** Church used the Greek texts since Greek was a **lingua franca** of the Roman Empire at the time, and the language of the Greco-Roman Church (**Aramaic** was the language of **Syriac Christianity**, which used the **Targums**). In addition the Church Fathers tended to accept Philo's account of the LXX's miraculous and inspired origin. Furthermore, the New Testament writers, when citing the Jewish scriptures or when quoting Jesus doing so, freely used the Greek translation, implying that Jesus, his Apostles and their followers considered it reliable.<sup>[27]</sup>

When **Jerome** undertook the revision of the **Old Latin** translations of the Septuagint, he checked the Septuagint against the Hebrew texts that were then available. He came to believe that the Hebrew text better testified to Christ than the Septuagint.<sup>[28]</sup> He broke with church tradition and translated most of the **Old Testament** of his **Vulgate** from Hebrew rather than Greek. His choice was severely criticized by Augustine, his contemporary; a flood of still less moderate criticism came from those who regarded Jerome as a forger. But with the passage of time, acceptance of Jerome's version gradually increased until it displaced the **Old Latin translations** of the Septuagint.<sup>[5]</sup>

The Hebrew text diverges in some passages that Christians hold to prophesy Christ<sup>[29]</sup> and the **Eastern Orthodox Church** still prefers to use the LXX as the basis for translating the Old Testament into other languages. The Eastern Orthodox also use LXX untranslated where Greek is the liturgical language, e.g. in the **Orthodox Church of Constantinople**, the **Church of Greece** and the **Cypriot Orthodox Church**. Many modern critical translations of the **Old Testament**, while using the Masoretic text as their basis, consult the Septuagint as well as other versions in an attempt to reconstruct the meaning of the Hebrew text whenever the latter is unclear, undeniably corrupt, or ambiguous.<sup>[5]</sup>

**Apocrypha**[\[edit\]](#)

*Main article: **Biblical Apocrypha***

The Septuagint includes some books not found in the **Hebrew Bible**. Many **Protestant** Bibles follow the Jewish **canon** and exclude the additional books. **Roman Catholics**, however, include some of these books in their canon while **Eastern Orthodox** Churches use all the books of the Septuagint (except the **Psalms of Solomon**<sup>[30]</sup>). **Anglican** lectionaries also use all of the books except **Psal****m** **151**, and the full **Authorized (King James) Version** includes these additional books in a separate section labelled the "**Apocrypha**".

**Language of the Septuagint**[\[edit\]](#)

Some sections of the Septuagint may show **Semiticisms**, or idioms and phrases based on Semitic languages like **Hebrew** and **Aramaic**.<sup>[27]</sup> Other books, such as LXX **Daniel** and **Proverbs**, show Greek influence more strongly.<sup>[4]</sup> The book of Daniel that is found in almost all Greek bibles, however, is not from the LXX, but rather from **Theodot****ion's** translation, which more closely resembles the Masoretic Daniel.<sup>[4]</sup>

The LXX is also useful for elucidating pre-Masoretic **Hebrew**: many proper nouns are spelled out with Greek vowels in the LXX, while contemporary Hebrew texts lacked vowel pointing.<sup>[31]</sup> One must, however, evaluate such evidence with caution since it is extremely unlikely that all ancient Hebrew sounds had precise Greek equivalents.<sup>[32]</sup>

**Books of the Septuagint**[\[edit\]](#)

*See also **Table of books below**.*

All the books of western **canons** of the **Old Testament** are found in the Septuagint, although the order does not always coincide with the Western ordering of the books. The Septuagint order for the Old Testament is evident in the earliest Christian Bibles (5th century).<sup>[4]</sup>

Some books that are set apart in the Masoretic text are grouped together. For example the **Books of Samuel** and the **Books of Kings** are in the LXX one book in four parts called Βασιλειῶν ("Of Reigns"); scholars believe that this is the original arrangement before the book was divided for readability. In LXX, the **Books of Chronicles** supplement Reigns and it is called Paraleipoménon (Παραλειπομένων—things left out). The Septuagint organizes the **minor prophets** as twelve parts of one Book of Twelve.<sup>[4]</sup>

Some scripture of ancient origin are found in the Septuagint but are not present in the Hebrew. These include additions to **Daniel** and **Esther**. For more information regarding these books, see the articles **Biblical apocrypha**, **Biblical canon**, **Books of the Bible**, and **Deuterocanonical books**.

The New Testament makes a number of allusions to and may quote the additional books. The books are **Tobit**, **Judith**, **Wisdom of Solomon**, **Wisdom of Jesus Sirach**, **Baruch**, **Epistle of Jeremy** (which later became chapter 6 of Baruch in the Vulgate), additions to **Daniel** (**The Prayer of Azarias**, the **Song of the Three Children**, **Sosanna** and **Bel and the Dragon**), additions to **Esther**, **1 Maccabees**, **2 Maccabees**, **3 Maccabees**, **4 Maccabees**, **1 Esdras**, **Odes**, including the **Prayer of Manasses**, and **Psal****m** **151**. The canonical acceptance of these books varies among different Christian traditions, and there are canonical books not derived from the Septuagint; for a discussion see the article on **Biblical apocrypha**.

**Extracts from Theodotion**[\[edit\]](#)

In most ancient copies of the Bible which contain the Septuagint version of the Old Testament, the Book of Daniel is not the original Septuagint version, but instead is a copy of **Theodot****ion's** translation from the Hebrew.<sup>[33]</sup> The Septuagint version of the Book of Daniel was discarded, in favour of Theodotion's version, in the second to third centuries; in Greek-speaking areas, this happened near the end of the second century, and in Latin-speaking areas (at least in North Africa), it occurred in the middle of the third century.<sup>[33]</sup> History does not record the reason for this, and **Jerome** basically reports, in the preface to the Vulgate version of Daniel, *this thing 'just' happened*<sup>[33]</sup>.

The canonical Ezra-Nehemiah is known in the Septuagint as "Esdras B", and 1 Esdras is "Esdras A". 1 Esdras is a very similar text to the books of Ezra-Nehemiah, and the two are widely thought by scholars to be derived from the same original text. It has been proposed, and is thought highly likely by scholars, that "Esdras B" - the canonical Ezra-Nehemiah - is Theodotion's version of this material, and "Esdras A" is the version which was previously in the Septuagint on its own<sup>[33]</sup>.

**Printed editions**[\[edit\]](#)

The texts of all printed editions are derived from the three recensions mentioned above, that of Origen, Lucian, or Hesychius.

- The ***editio princeps*** is the **Complutensian Polyglot**. It was based on manuscripts that are now lost, but seems to transmit quite early readings.<sup>[34]</sup>
- The Aldine edition (begun by **Aldus Manutius**) appeared at Venice in 1518. The text is closer to Codex Vaticanus than the Complutensian. The editor says he collated ancient manuscripts but does not specify them. It has been reprinted several times.
- The most important edition is the Roman or Sixtine, which reproduces the Codex Vaticanus" almost exclusively. It was published under the direction of **Cardinal Caraffa**, with the help of various savants, in 1586, by the authority of Sixtus V, to assist the revisers who were preparing the Latin Vulgate edition ordered by the Council of Trent. It has become the textus receptus of the Greek Old Testament and has had many new editions, such as that of **Robert Holmes** and **James**



- Parsons** (Oxford, 1798-1827), the seven editions of **Constantin von Tischendorf**, which appeared at Leipzig between 1850 and 1887, the last two, published after the death of the author and revised by Nestle, the four editions of **Henry Barclay Swete** (Cambridge, 1887-95, 1901, 1909), etc.
- Grabe's edition was published at Oxford, from 1707 to 1720, and reproduced, but imperfectly, the "Codex Alexandrinus" of London. For partial editions, see **Fulcran Vigouroux**, *Dictionnaire de la Bible*, 1643 sqq.
  - Alfred Rahlfs, a longtime Septuagint researcher at Göttingen, began a manual edition of the Septuagint in 1917 or 1918. The completed *Septuaginta* was published in 1935. It relies mainly on Vaticanus, Sinaiticus, and Alexandrinus, and presents a critical apparatus with variants from these and several other sources.<sup>[35]</sup>
  - The Göttingen Septuagint (*Vetus Testamentum Graecum: Auctoritate Academiae Scientiarum Gottingensis editum*) is a major critical version, comprising multiple volumes published from 1931 to 2006 and not yet complete. Its two critical apparatuses present variant Septuagint readings and variants from other Greek versions.<sup>[36]</sup>
  - In 2006, a revision of Alfred Rahlfs's *Septuaginta* was published by the German Bible Society. This *editio altera* includes over a thousand changes to the text and apparatus.<sup>[37]</sup>
  - *The Apostolic Bible Polyglot* contains a Septuagint text derived mainly from the agreement of any two of the Complutensian Polyglot, the Sixtine, and the Aldine texts.<sup>[38]</sup>

English Translations of the Septuagint

[\[edit\]](#)

The Septuagint has been translated a few times into English, the first one (though excluding the Apocrypha) being that of **Charles Thomson in 1808**; his translation was later revised and enlarged by C. A. Muses in 1954. **The translation of Sir Lancelot C. L. Brenton**, published in 1851, is a long-time standard. For most of the time since its publication it has been the only one readily available, and has continually been in print. It is based primarily upon the **Codex Vaticanus** and contains the Greek and English texts in parallel columns. There also is a revision of the Brenton Septuagint available through Stauros Ministries, called *The Apostles' Bible*, released in January 2008. <sup>[2]</sup>

The International Organization for Septuagint and Cognate Studies (IOSCS) has produced *A New English Translation of the Septuagint and the Other Greek Translations Traditionally Included Under that Title* (NETS), an academic translation based on standard critical editions of the Greek texts. It was published by **Oxford University Press** in October 2007.

**The Apostolic Bible Polyglot**, published in 2007, includes the Greek books of the Hebrew canon along with the Greek New Testament, all numerically coded to the AB-Strong numbering system, and set in monotonic orthography. Included in the printed edition is a concordance and index.

The **Orthodox Study Bible** was released in early 2008 with a new translation of the Septuagint based on the **New King James Version**. It also includes extensive commentary from an **Eastern Orthodox** perspective.<sup>[39]</sup>

The **Eastern / Greek Orthodox Bible** (EOB) is an extensive revision and correction of Brenton's translation which was primarily based on **Codex Vaticanus**. Its language and syntax has been modernized and simplified. It also includes extensive introductory material and footnotes featuring significant inter-LXX and LXX/MT variants.

International Septuagint Day

[\[edit\]](#)

The International Organization for Septuagint and Cognate Studies (IOSCS), a nonprofit, learned society formed to promote international research in and study of the Septuagint and related texts,<sup>[40]</sup> has established February 8 annually as International Septuagint Day, a day to promote the discipline on campuses and in communities.

Defining Septuagint

[\[edit\]](#)

Although the integrity of the Septuagint as a text distinct from the Masoretic text is supported by Dead Sea scroll evidence, the LXX does show signs of age in that textual variants are attested. There is at least one highly unreliable nearly complete text of the LXX, **Codex Alexandrinus**. Nearly complete texts of the Septuagint are also found in the **Codex Vaticanus Graecus 1209** and **Codex Sinaiticus**, which do not perfectly coincide. But the LXX is a particularly excellent text when compared to other ancient works with textual variants. It has been argued that it is unjustified to reject the existence of a *Septuagint* merely on the basis of variation due to editorial recension and typographical error.<sup>[41][42]</sup>

The title "Septuagint" should not to be confused with the seven or more other Greek versions of the Old Testament, most of which do not survive except as fragments. These other Greek versions were once in side-by-side columns of **Origen's Hexapla**, now almost wholly lost. Of these the most important are "the three:" those by **Aquila**, **Symmachus**, and **Theodotion**, which are identified by particular Semiticisms and placement of Hebrew and Aramaic characters within their Greek texts.

One of two Old Greek texts of the Book of Daniel has been recently rediscovered and work is ongoing in reconstructing the original form of the Septuagint as a whole.<sup>[4]</sup>

Table of books

[\[edit\]](#)

The Orthodox Old Testament <sup>[2][19][43]</sup>	Greek-based name	Conventional English name
<b>Law</b>		
Γένεσις	Génesis	Genesis
Ἔξοδος	Éxodos	Exodus
Λευιτικόν	Leuitikón	Leviticus
Ἀριθμοί	Arithmoí	Numbers
Δευτερονόμιον	Deuteronómion	Deuteronomy
<b>History</b>		
Ἰησοῦς Ναυὴ	Iêsous Nauê	Joshua
Κριταί	Kritai	Judges
Ῥούθ	Róuth	Ruth
Βασιλειῶν Α' <sup>[44]</sup>	I Reigns	I Samuel
Βασιλειῶν Β'	II Reigns	II Samuel
Βασιλειῶν Γ'	III Reigns	I Kings
Βασιλειῶν Δ'	IV Reigns	II Kings
Παραλειπομένων Α'	I Paralipomenon <sup>[45]</sup>	I Chronicles
Παραλειπομένων Β'	II Paralipomenon	II Chronicles
Ἑσδρας Α'	I Esdras	1 Esdras;
Ἑσδρας Β'	II Esdras	Ezra-Nehemiah
Ἑσθῆρ	Esther	Esther with additions
Ἰουδῖθ	Ioudith	Judith
Τωβίτ <sup>[46]</sup>	Tobit	Tobit or Tobias
Μακκαβαίων Α'	I Makkabees	1 Maccabees
Μακκαβαίων Β'	II Makkabees	2 Maccabees
Μακκαβαίων Γ'	III Makkabees	3 Maccabees
<b>Wisdom</b>		



Ψαλμοί	Psalms	Psalms
Ψαλμός ΡΝΑ'	<b>Psalms 151</b>	Psalms 151
Προσευχή Μανάσση	<b>Prayer of Manasseh</b>	Prayer of Manasseh
Ίώβ	Iōb	Job
Προιμίαι	Proverbs	Proverbs
Ἐκκλησιαστής	Ecclesiastes	Ecclesiastes
Ἄσμα Ἀσμάτων	Song of Songs	Song of Solomon
Σοφία Σολομώντος	Wisdom of Solomon	Wisdom
Σοφία Ἰησοῦ Σειράχ	<b>Wisdom of Jesus the son of Seirach</b>	Sirach or Ecclesiasticus
Ψαλμοί Σολομώντος	<b>Psalms of Solomon</b>	Psalms of Solomon <sup>[47]</sup>
<b>Prophets</b>		
<b>Δώδεκα</b>	<b>The Twelve</b>	<b>Minor Prophets</b>
Ὡσηέ Α'	I. Osée	Hosea
Ἀμώς Β'	II. Ἀμὼς	Amos
Μιχαῖος Γ'	III. Mchalias	Mcah
Ἰωήλ Δ'	IV. Ioel	Joel
Ὀβδίου Ε' <sup>[48]</sup>	V. Obdias	Obadiah
Ἰωνᾶς Σ'	VI. Ionas	Jonah
Ναούμ Ζ'	VII. Naoum	Nahum
Ἀμβακούμ Η'	VIII. Ambakum	Habakkuk
Σοφονίας Θ'	IX. Sophonias	Zephaniah
Ἀγγαῖος Ι'	X. Ἄγγαῖος	Haggai
Ζαχαρίας ΙΑ'	XI. Zacharias	Zachariah
Ἄγγελος ΙΒ'	XII. Messenger	Malachi
Ἠσαῖος	Hesaias	Isaiah
Ἱερεμίας	Heremias	Jeremiah
Βαρούχ	Baruch	Baruch
Ορθήνοι	Lamentations	Lamentations
Επιστολή Ἱερεμίου	<b>Epistle of Jeremiah</b>	Letter of Jeremiah
Ἰεζεκιήλ	Iezekiél	Ezekiel
Δανιήλ	Daniél	Daniel with additions
<b>Appendix</b>		
Μακκαβαίων Δ' Παράρτημα	<b>IV Makkabees</b>	4 Maccabees <sup>[49]</sup>

See also

[edit]

- Brenton's English Translation of the Septuagint
- Alfred Rahlfs — editor of a commonly distributed critical edition of LXX
- La Bible d'Alexandrie*
- Documentary hypothesis — discusses the theoretical recensional history of the **Torah/Pentateuch** in Hebrew.
- Tanakh at Qumran — some of the Dead Sea Scrolls are witnesses to the LXX text.
- List of Greek fragments of the Old Testament that have the Tetragrammaton
- Vulgate



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<sup>**a** **b** **c** **d** **e**</sup> Karen Jobes and Moises Silva, *Invitation to the Septuagint* *ISBN 1-84227-061-3*, (Paternoster Press, 2001). - *The current standard for Introductory works on the Septuagint.*

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Life after death: a history of the afterlife in the religions of the West , Alan F. Segal, p.363

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<sup>**a** **b** **c** **d** **e** **f** **g** **h** **i** **j** **k**</sup> Jennifer M Dines, *The Septuagint*, Michael A. Knibb, Ed., London: T&T Clark, 2004

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<sup>**a** **b** **c** **d** **e** **f**</sup> Ernst Würthwein, *The Text of the Old Testament*, trans. Errol F. Rhodes, Grand Rapids, Mich.: Eardmans, 1995.

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Sir Godfrey Driver, *Introduction to the Old Testament of the New English Bible* (1970)

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See Books of the Bible

12.

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*The Canon Debate*, McDonald & Sanders editors, chapter by Sundberg, page 72, adds further detail: "However, it was not until the time of Augustine of Hippo (354-430 AD) that the Greek translation of the Jewish scriptures came to be called by the Latin term *septuaginta*. [70 rather than 72] In his *City of God* 18.42, while repeating the story of Aristeas with typical embellishments, Augustine adds the remark, "It is their translation that it has now become traditional to call the Septuagint" ...[Latin omitted]... Augustine thus indicates that this name for the Greek translation of the scriptures was a recent development. But he offers no clue as to which of the possible antecedents led to this development: **Exod 24:1-8**, Josephus [Antiquities 12.57, 12.86], or an elision. ...this name *Septuagint* appears to have been a fourth to fifth-century development."

13.

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Translation of Torah into other languages was forbidden by **Halakha**

14.

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Compare Dines, who is certain only of Symmachus being a truly new version, with Würthwein, who considers only Theodotion to be a revision, and even then possibly of an earlier non-LXX version.

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See, Jinbachian, *Some Semantically Significant Differences Between the Masoretic Text and the Septuagint*, [1] .

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<sup>**a** **b**</sup> Timothy McLay, *The Use of the Septuagint in New Testament Research* *ISBN 0-8028-6091-5*. — The current standard introduction on the NT & LXX.

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33. <sup>^</sup> **a** **b** **c** **d** *This article incorporates text from the 1903 *Encyclopaedia Biblica* article "TEXT AND VERSIONS", a publication now in the public domain.*
34. <sup>^</sup> Joseph Ziegler, "Der griechische Dodekepropheton-Text der Complutenser Polyglotte," *Biblica* 25:297-310, cited in Würthwein.
35. <sup>^</sup> Rahlf's, A. (Ed.). (1935/1979). *Septuaginta*. Stuttgart: Deutsche Bibelgesellschaft.
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39. <sup>^</sup> About the Orthodox Study Bible
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41. <sup>^</sup> Priestly
42. <sup>^</sup> "A New Look at the Septuagint"
43. <sup>^</sup> The canon of the original Old Greek LXX is disputed. This table reflects the canon of the Old Testament as used currently in Orthodoxy.
44. <sup>^</sup> Βοθηλαῖον (Basileion) is the genitive plural of Βοηλαία (Basileia).
45. <sup>^</sup> That is, *Things set aside* from Ἐσθρας Α'.
46. <sup>^</sup> also called Τυβείρ or Τυβίθ in some sources.
47. <sup>^</sup> Not in Orthodox Canon, but originally included in the LXX. http://ccat.sas.upenn.edu/nets/editon/
48. <sup>^</sup> Obdiou is genitive from "The vision of Obdias," which opens the book.
49. <sup>^</sup> Originally placed after 3 Maccabees and before Psalms, but placed in an appendix of the Orthodox Canon

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External links

[edit]

General

[edit]

- The Septuagint Online - Comprehensive site with scholarly discussion and links to texts and translations
- The Septuagint Institute
- Jewish Encyclopedia: Bible Translations
- Catholic Encyclopedia: Septuagint Version
- Catholic Encyclopedia: Versions of the Bible
- Comparison of names in the LXX and Hebrew Bible📖 (PDF)
- Free Online Bibliography (up to date) from BiBIL🔗
- Codex: Resources and Links Relating to the Septuagint
- Extensive chronological and canonical list of Early Papyri and Manuscripts of the Septuagint
- "Septuagint". *Encyclopædia Britannica* (11th ed.). 1911.

Greek Wikisource has original text related to this article:  
The complete Greek text of the modern Septuagint

Wikisource has original text related to this article:  
1911 Britannica entry

Texts and translations

[edit]

- Septuagint and New Testament - Despite its name, this site does *not* in fact provide the LXX, rather a shortened version which eliminates all the LXX books later called "deuterocanonical." The Greek NT is presented in full. Both Greek texts, the (incomplete) LXX and the NT, have **parsing** and **concordance**.
- Elpenor's Bilingual (Greek / English) Septuagint Old Testament - Greek text (full polytonic unicode version) and English translation side by side. Greek text as used by the Orthodox Churches.
- Full PDF version of the Septuagint - (without diacritical marks)
- Titus Text Collection: Vetus Testamentum graece iuxta LXX interpretes - (advanced research tool)
- Septuagint published by the Church of Greece
- Plain text of the whole LXX
- Greek-English interlinear of OT & NT - **Monotonic orthography**.
- Bible Resource Pages - contains Septuagint texts (with diacritics) side-by-side with English translations
- The Septuagint in Greek - as a **MS Word** document (Requires **Vusllius Old Face** - Intro and book abbreviations in Latin.)
- The Book of Daniel from an Old Greek LXX - (no diacritics, needs special font)
- Sir Lancelot C.L. Brenton's translation
- The New English Translation of the Septuagint (NETS), electronic edition
- Project to produce an Orthodox Study Bible (OSB) whose Old Testament is based entirely on the Septuagint.
- EOB: Eastern / Greek Orthodox Bible: includes comprehesive introductory materials dealing with Septuagintal issues and an Old Testament which is an extensive revision of the Brenton with footnotes.
- The Holy Orthodox Bible, another English translation project of the Septuagint using the official Greek Orthodox texts
- The Septuagint LXX in English (Online text of the entire LXX English translation by Sir Lancelot Brenton)

The LXX and the NT

[edit]

- Septuagint references in NT - by John Salza
- An Apology for the Septuagint - By Edward William Grinfield

Categories: Bible versions and translations | Septuagint | Jews and Judaism-related controversies | Christian Biblical canon | 200s BC | Christian terms



# A Brief Introduction to the Canon and Ancient Versions of Scripture

by Michael Marlowe

## Our Reception of the Bible

Most people today receive the writings arranged and bound together in their Bibles as Holy Scripture simply because that is what they find bound together under that title in a book they have purchased at the bookstore. Many Protestants are also aware of the fact that in choosing a Bible one must avoid the shelf labelled "Roman Catholic Bibles," because these are designed to promote Catholic beliefs and they also contain some books that we do not even receive as Scripture — the ones we refer to as belonging to the "Apocrypha." But why do we reject these books? Very few of us have even read them. In fact, many Christians have not read all of the books which they do consider to be Scripture. And so it is evident that most of us receive certain books and reject others not because we have personally evaluated them in any way, but because we trust that someone else has evaluated them and decided rightly concerning this matter, so that all scripture and nothing but scripture is between the covers of our Bibles. The question then becomes, who has made this decision, and are they really competent to decide for all of us?

When we go to the store we find Bibles which have been published by publishers, of course, such as Nelson and Zondervan, but most of the publishers are connected with Christian organizations which have commissioned these versions: Bible societies, church councils and associations, and so forth. These have arranged for certain books to be included or excluded, according to the traditions of their member churches. These traditions go back to the founding fathers of the denominations, and ultimately to the ancient Catholic Church.

## Formation of the New Testament Canon

Charts and Documents for this section:

- [The New Testament Canon](#)
- [Disputed Books of the New Testament](#)
- [Ancient Canon Lists](#)
- [Samples of Ancient Heretical Writings](#)

**Gradual and independent definition of the canon by elders.** In the year 367 an influential bishop named [Athanasius](#) published a list of books to be read in the churches under his care, which included precisely those books we have in our Bibles (with this exception — he admitted Baruch and omitted Esther in the Old Testament). [Other such lists](#) had been published by others, as early as the year 170, although [they did not all agree](#). How did the men who published these lists decide which books should be called Scripture? Scholars who have studied this matter closely have concluded that the lists of books are merely ratifications of the decisions of the majority of churches from earliest days. We are able to prove this by examining the surviving works of [Irenaeus](#) (born 130), who lived in days before anyone felt it was necessary to list the approved books. He quotes as Scripture all of the books and only the books that appear in the list published on another continent and sixty years later by Origen.

It is evident that the elders of each congregation had approved certain writings and rejected others as they became available, and it turned out, by the grace of God, that most of the churches were by the year 170 in agreement, having approved the same books independently. Prominent teachers were also influential in this process. About that time bishops began to prevail in the Church, as governors of groups of churches, and they simply ratified with these lists the results thus arrived at. The approved books were then called the "canon" of Scripture, "canon" being a Greek word meaning "rod" or "ruler." These books constituted the standard *rule of faith* for all the churches. We must not imagine that the canon was imposed by ecclesiastical authorities. The canon grew up by many independent decisions of elders who were responsible for their congregations alone.

**The elders received apostolic writings as authoritative.** Then we must ask, how did the elders of the churches decide which writings should be read in church as authoritative? The answer is simple: They received the writings of the *apostles* and their closest companions, and the writings endorsed by them. The entire Old Testament was received by the implicit endorsement of the apostles. The Gospel of Matthew was written by an apostle. The Gospel of Mark was written by the apostle Peter's closest disciple. The Gospel of Luke was written by the apostle Paul's close companion. The Gospel of John was written by an apostle. The Acts of the Apostles was written by Paul's close companion. Thirteen letters were received from Paul. The epistle to the Hebrews was received as from Paul. The epistle of James comes from the brother of the Lord, who exercised authority in Jerusalem with the apostles. The epistle of Jude was from another brother of the Lord. The two epistles of Peter are from an apostle. The three epistles of John are from an apostle, who also wrote the Revelation. We may ask, How did they know that these writings were not forgeries? The churches did not receive them from strangers. These documents were hand-delivered by friends of the apostles to elders who also knew the apostles personally. Forgeries would be obvious, especially if the writing promoted [strange doctrines](#).

**Minor disagreements in earliest days.** Some disagreements arose along with the rise of heresies. The elders of the churches became wary, and even began to doubt some of the writings they had formerly received as copies from other churches. Writings which came under question were Hebrews, James, Jude, 2 Peter, 2 and 3 John, and the Revelation of John. The reasons for doubt were various. The author of Hebrews does not identify himself. James was not an apostle, and his message seemed to contradict Paul's message. Jude was not an apostle, and he quotes books which the churches did not receive as Scripture. 2 Peter, it seems, was not widely distributed at first. The author of 2 and 3 John does not identify himself plainly. The author of the Revelation identifies himself as John, but does not say that he is the *apostle* John, and the style of the book is different from the Gospel of John. Nevertheless, the majority of churches received and used these books without questioning them, *while vigorously rejecting all others*.

**Universal agreement in modern times.** Today we have no good reason for doubting the canon of the New Testament. It would be wrong for me to suggest that everyone needs to investigate these matters and decide for himself which books he will receive as Scripture, without any respect for the decisions of the early churches. We are not in such a position to judge as the early church was, and we are bound to respect the well-nigh unanimous opinion of so many Christians of the past. As Paul says to the Corinthian innovators, "What! Was it from you that the word of God went forth? Or came it unto you alone?" Against such presumption he recommends that which is done "in all the churches of the saints." (14:33b-36). Recently some scholars have tried to promote strange doctrines by suggesting that some of our canonical writings are not genuine, and that other writings such as the *Gospel of Thomas* are equally valid "interpretations" of the life and teachings of Jesus Christ. I have studied their arguments, and I can assure you that they are not worth listening to.

## Reception of the Old Testament in Greek

Charts and Documents for this section:



- [Old Testament Canon and Apocrypha](#)
- [Disputed Books of the Old Testament](#)
- [Ancient Canon Lists](#)
- [Apostolic Use of the Septuagint](#)

**The Jewish use of versions.** In the synagogue the Hebrew scripture itself was read from a scroll, followed by a translation into Aramaic or Greek given by the *Methurgeman* (translator). The translation was never read from a scroll, because the Jews were determined not to give any version such an illusion of authority; the translation had to be memorized or done extemporaneously. In the beginning the translations were not even written down. When they were eventually written down they were not made widely available, and were not "authorized" in any sense by the Rabbis.

**The Greek version of the Old Testament, called the Septuagint.** About two hundred years before the birth of Christ a Greek translation of the Pentateuch was committed to writing in Alexandria, where many Jews only knew Greek. This version was later called the *Septuagint* because legend has it that the translation was done by seventy (Latin *septuaginta*) men. Gradually the other books of the Old Testament were also put in Greek. The Septuagint gives a fairly accurate translation of the Pentateuch, which was read most closely by the Jews, but for the prophetic books like Isaiah and Jeremiah the translation is often quite loose and even erroneous, and in need of correction.

**Apostolic use of the Septuagint.** The quotations of the Old Testament in the New show that the apostles often [used the Septuagint](#), because it was generally known to those in the Church and usually adequate for their purposes. Some people in looking at these quotations have been troubled by the fact that they are sometimes not very accurate translations of the Hebrew. Did the apostles not know their business? Of course they did. They did not concern themselves with corrections when the translation served well enough for their purpose, but when it did not they quietly offered their own translation of the Hebrew. Then they usually offered a better translation. The apostles did not see fit to produce a complete version of the Old Testament in Greek for the use of the churches.

**Extra books of the Septuagint, called the Apocrypha.** It is inaccurate to talk about the Septuagint as a single book in apostolic days: the various writings existed as separate scrolls, and were not bound in a single volume until the middle of the second century, when the codex or physical "book" as we know it was invented. <sup>(1)</sup> People did not have bookshelves, but cabinets or large cans full of these scrolls. The codex was adopted by Christians who wanted a more convenient way of referencing Scripture, and so the Greek Old Testament was one of the first collection of writings to be put in this form. When this was done, certain writings (called [Apocryphal](#)) which were highly regarded by the Greek-speaking Jews and often studied by them were bound in the same volume as the canonical books. The apostles never quote from these writings, and there is no reason to believe that they regarded them as Scripture, or would have approved of binding them with the other books in a codex.

**Status of the Apocrypha in the early Church.** Eventually the Septuagint came to be regarded as a kind of inspired paraphrase by teachers in the churches, mainly because the apostles had used it, and partly because they suspected that the Jews had deliberately corrupted the Hebrew text in anti-Christian ways since it was translated. Then the additional books traditionally included in complete copies of the Septuagint also came to be [regarded as Scripture](#) by some, especially in the West. This was a mistake, but it did little harm, because not much attention was paid to these books. At first the churches would not possess copies of the entire Septuagint, nor even all books of the Old Testament, but perhaps only separate codices of Genesis, Isaiah, Psalms; and they would gradually collect all the books. Copies of the entire Septuagint were very expensive.

## Reception of the Bible in Latin

Charts and Documents for this section:

- [Old Testament Canon and Apocrypha](#)
- [Disputed Books of the Old Testament](#)
- [Ancient Canon Lists](#)

**The Old Latin version.** Within two hundred years after the departure of the apostles there were many churches throughout the world in which the people did not understand Greek very well, and so new translations of both the Old and New Testaments were made into Syriac, Coptic, and Latin, for use in the churches. The Coptic and Latin versions were not translated directly from the Hebrew, but from the Greek Septuagint, and the Syriac was soon "corrected" from the Septuagint.

**The Vulgate.** In western Europe the variety of Latin translations and copies created confusion, and a notable scholar named [Jerome](#) was asked to look into the matter and to make a trustworthy translation. Jerome wisely revised the Latin versions from the Hebrew itself, and expressed his opinion, shared by many, that it was a mistake to receive the Apocryphal books just because they happened to be included in copies of the Septuagint. There was some resistance to Jerome's version, and to his exclusion of the Apocrypha. Latin translations of the Apocryphal books were [added to it](#), and in that form it became the version commonly used in the churches for a thousand years. This version came to be called the *Vulgate*, or "common" Bible.

**Protestant vs. Catholic views of the Vulgate.** When the Protestant reformers wrote biblical commentaries in Latin, they gave Latin translations of the biblical text, but in these translations they often departed from the Vulgate version. Luther and Calvin knew Hebrew and Greek, and they did not believe that the Vulgate should be regarded as an authoritative version. They also were aware of how the Apocryphal books came to be in the Vulgate, and so [they rejected them](#). The Roman Catholics, on the other hand, declared that the [Vulgate was an authoritative version](#) and not to be departed from. This idea of a uniquely authoritative version (which has recurred in our own times with the rise of the "King James Only" movement) has created many problems in Church history.

## Conclusion

**Protestant vs. Catholic views of the canon.** Protestant teachings concerning the canon are in general based upon the same principle which is employed by Protestant theologians in all sorts of questions about doctrine and church order: the clearly ancient teachings and practices are to be preferred over the medieval. In questions that are not answered by Scripture itself, we inquire into the earliest available evidence for the teachings and practices of the churches, and have little regard for traditions that cannot be traced back to the generation that immediately followed the Apostles. <sup>(2)</sup> And so with respect to the canon, we are interested to know what the earliest available sources have to say. That is why the resolution of this question partly depends upon an examination of the [ancient canon lists](#). When these lists are examined, we find that the earlier ones omit the Apocrypha, and that the later ones (beginning at the end of the fourth century in the West) include it. The Apocrypha began to be put on the same level as our canonical books at about the same time as many other innovations entered into the Church.

**Implications for the text of Scripture.** A word may be added here concerning the text of Scripture, which is in a sense a question of canon also. The



canonical text for Protestants is the original autographic text, in Hebrew and Greek. Our investigation of this text, as Protestants, can only proceed on the same principle adhered to in the investigation of the canon. There can be no authoritative medieval version, as in Catholicism, and the manuscript tradition cannot all be put on one level. Instead, we are bound to inquire, What do the *earliest sources* support? The idea which has gained some currency among conservative Protestants lately, namely, that the traditional medieval text upon which the King James Version is based is to be regarded as authoritative *simply because it became traditional*, involves the adoption of an essentially Catholic view of tradition and authority, foreign to the spirit of Protestantism. This approach is inconsistent with the rejection of the Apocrypha, and of all other corruptions which arose in the middle ages.

1. For a good brief discussion of this whole question see E. Earl Ellis, *The Old Testament in Early Christianity* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1991), Chapter 1, "The Old Testament Canon in the Early Church." Ellis concludes that the churches did not receive or adopt a wider Septuagint canon until the fourth century.

2. As Tertullian wrote: *Quo peraeque adversus universas haereses iam hinc praeiudicatum sit id esse, verum quodcunque primum, id esse adulterum quodcunque posterius*. "For against all heresies equally let this now be our presumption: whatever is earliest is true, and whatever is later is corrupt." (*Against Praxeas*, chap. 2.)

AT RIGHT: Detail from the title page of an early printing of the Geneva Bible. The Latin motto *Verbum Dei Manet in Aeternum* (The Word of God Abideth Forever) was commonly used by Protestants of the era to express their devotion to Scripture. In the iconography of this illustration, the placement of the motto on a clasped book identifies the "Word of God" with the printed Bibles of the era. A hand from the clouds signifies that the Bible was given by heaven.



[home](#) : [index](#) : [ancient Judaea](#) : article by Jona Lendering ©

## Septuagint

**Septuagint:** Greek translation of the Jewish Bible, made in the third century BCE for the Jews living in the [Diaspora](#). The name means 'translation by seventy men'

After the conquests of the [Macedonian](#) king [Alexander the Great](#) (336-323), the land of [Israel](#) became part of the empire of the [Ptolemies](#), a Macedonian dynasty that ruled Egypt and the southern Levant. In the late fourth century, Jewish migration to the country along the Nile started, and in the third century, we find colonies of merchants and mercenaries in [Alexandria](#) and elsewhere. According to Philo, a Jewish author from the early first century CE, about a million Jews were living in Egypt. Most of them spoke Greek, not Hebrew or Aramaic, and they needed a translation of the Bible.

According to the *Letter of Aristeas*, a document maybe written in c.170 BCE, the initiative for this translation was not Jewish but Greek. King [Ptolemy II Philadelphus](#) (282-246) wanted to build a library that contained all the books in the world. The first librarian was Demetrius of Phalerum, who thought that such a collection should also contain a translation of the Law of Moses. Consequently, he sent a letter to Eleazar, the high priest at Jerusalem, asking him to send seventy-two translators, six from every tribe.

Eleazar agreed to the proposal, and the king welcomed the translators with a banquet that lasted seven days. Finally, they were brought to their quarters on a quiet island near Alexandria, and in seventy-two days, they completed the translation of the Law of Moses. They proceeded to translate the rest of the Jewish Bible (Prophets and Scriptures), and after the project was completed, they returned to their homes, with royal gifts for Eleazar.

The story is clearly legendary. Several details are historically inaccurate. For example, Demetrius of Phalerum was not involved in the establishment of the famous library of Alexandria. The author of the *Letter of Aristeas* puts this champion of Greek culture on the stage to show that Jews and non-Jews could live together in harmony. On the other hand, there is no reason to doubt that the Jewish Bible was translated in the first half of the third century BCE.

This translation is known in many medieval manuscripts, and two books that are even older: the *Codex Sinaiticus* and *Codex Vaticanus* were written in the fourth century. In spite of the antiquity of these manuscripts, there are several problems.

- Was there really one translation?
- Why are there differences between the *Septuagint* and the Hebrew version of the Bible?
- Are our manuscripts reliable, or must we assume that there are later interpolations?

We will discuss these questions below.

### Was there one translation?

This question was asked for the first time by the German *Alttertumswissenschaftler* of the nineteenth century and has been hotly debated. Several scholars have stated that there was one single translation, and others have proposed that there were in fact several versions. There is one strong argument for the second position: the fact that there are certain divergences between the manuscripts.

It seems that the truth is somewhere in the middle. There was one single translation of the Law of Moses, but almost immediately, copyists started to make alterations. To a certain extent, this was a natural process (when a person has to copy a text, he will inevitably make mistakes); on the other hand, different [Diasporic](#) communities had different beliefs, which necessitated small adaptations. The other two parts of the Jewish Bible, Prophets and Scriptures, were translated by various people in the second century. The result might have become a big mess, but copyists usually checked other manuscripts, and several scholars (e.g., Aquila, Symmachus and Theodotion) prepared critical editions. The result of their activities was a set of more or less controlled traditions of the text.

### Why are there differences between the Septuagint and the Hebrew version of the Bible?



Ptolemy II Philadelphus  
(British Museum, London)



The Jewish Bible is written in Hebrew. When the *Septuagint* was made, most Jews in the land of Israel spoke Aramaic, a language that is closely related to Hebrew. They did not need a translation and kept reading and copying the Bible in the original language. This process continued until the printing press was discovered in the fifteenth century. The most important manuscript is the *Codex Leningrad*, which was written c.1000. The texts of this and other Hebrew manuscripts are called the Masoretic tradition.

Sometimes, there are differences between the Masoretic text and the *Septuagint*. For example, the Greek books of *Daniel* and *Esther* are considerably longer than the Hebrew equivalents. These texts were probably written in the second century, and it is likely that additions were made after the text had been translated into Greek. In the Hebrew version of *Esther*, God is not mentioned, and it is easy to see why a pious, Greek speaking Jew would have added a few lines.

Another explanation is that between c.100 BCE and c.200 CE, the *Septuagint* was, as we noted above, a set of more or less controlled traditions. The same can be said for the Hebrew version; the Dead Sea scrolls have shown that at the beginning of our era, there were several variant readings of the Biblical texts. After 200, new, critical editions were made of the Greek and Hebrew text, and the editors did not choose the same textual variants.

#### Are our manuscripts reliable, or must we assume that there are later interpolations?

In the early third century, the Christian scholar Origen (186-254) prepared a new, critical edition of the Bible, which became known as the *Hexapla* or Sixfold book. In six columns, it contained a Hebrew text; the same text in Greek script; the text of Aquila; the text of Symmachus; a reconstructed text of the original *Septuagint*; and the text of Theodotion. The *Hexapla* had 6,000 pages in 50 volumes, and is now lost. However, almost all ancient and medieval manuscripts of the *Septuagint* are based on Origen's reconstruction.

There are no indications that Origen deliberately tried to falsify the sacred texts, but he sometimes had to choose between variant readings. One example may illustrate this. The Gospel of Luke contains a list of *Jesus'* ancestors, of which the first part is identical to the genealogy of king David, who was, after all, among Jesus' ancestors. However, Luke's list contains two names that Origen did not find in the manuscripts of the *Septuagint* that he consulted. Being Christian, he accepted Luke's version.

Unfortunately, Luke was responsible for the two additional names - and not the source of the *Septuagint*. The evangelist had created a genealogical system in which everybody who was anybody belonged to a "seventh generation": e.g., Abraham to the 21st generation, David to the 35th, and Jesus to the 77th ([details](#)). So, we have to accept a minor error in Origen's Bible. No doubt there are other, unrecognized inaccuracies.

The result is that it is impossible to reconstruct the original version of the *Septuagint*. Because the Masoretic text has a similar editorial history, we must conclude that we can not know the original wording of the books of the Jewish Bible. The texts of the Dead Sea scrolls are sometimes closer to the Masoretic tradition, and sometimes closer to the *Septuagint*; therefore, they can not be used to decide which version is better.

It should, however, be stressed that the differences are usually not very large. Although we are unable to reconstruct the precise wording of Law, Prophets and Scriptures in, say, 250 BCE, we can safely assume that it was more or less like the text of our present-day Bibles.

#### Literature

- E. J. Bickermann, "Some Notes on the Transmission of the *Septuagint*" in: S. Lieberman (ed.): *Festschrift A. Marx* (1950) 149-178
- Emanuel Tov, "Die griechische Bibelübersetzungen" in: *Aufstieg und Niedergang der römischen Welt* 2.20.1 (1987) 121-189
- The text of the *Septuagint* can be read [here](#).

[home](#) : [index](#) : [ancient Judaea](#)



# A Brief Introduction to the Canon and Ancient Versions of Scripture

by Michael Marlowe

## Our Reception of the Bible

Most people today receive the writings arranged and bound together in their Bibles as Holy Scripture simply because that is what they find bound together under that title in a book they have purchased at the bookstore. Many Protestants are also aware of the fact that in choosing a Bible one must avoid the shelf labelled "Roman Catholic Bibles," because these are designed to promote Catholic beliefs and they also contain some books that we do not even receive as Scripture — the ones we refer to as belonging to the "Apocrypha." But why do we reject these books? Very few of us have even read them. In fact, many Christians have not read all of the books which they do consider to be Scripture. And so it is evident that most of us receive certain books and reject others not because we have personally evaluated them in any way, but because we trust that someone else has evaluated them and decided rightly concerning this matter, so that all scripture and nothing but scripture is between the covers of our Bibles. The question then becomes, who has made this decision, and are they really competent to decide for all of us?

When we go to the store we find Bibles which have been published by publishers, of course, such as Nelson and Zondervan, but most of the publishers are connected with Christian organizations which have commissioned these versions: Bible societies, church councils and associations, and so forth. These have arranged for certain books to be included or excluded, according to the traditions of their member churches. These traditions go back to the founding fathers of the denominations, and ultimately to the ancient Catholic Church.

## Formation of the New Testament Canon

Charts and Documents for this section:

- [The New Testament Canon](#)
- [Disputed Books of the New Testament](#)
- [Ancient Canon Lists](#)
- [Samples of Ancient Heretical Writings](#)

**Gradual and independent definition of the canon by elders.** In the year 367 an influential bishop named [Athanasius](#) published a list of books to be read in the churches under his care, which included precisely those books we have in our Bibles (with this exception — he admitted Baruch and omitted Esther in the Old Testament). [Other such lists](#) had been published by others, as early as the year 170, although [they did not all agree](#). How did the men who published these lists decide which books should be called Scripture? Scholars who have studied this matter closely have concluded that the lists of books are merely ratifications of the decisions of the majority of churches from earliest days. We are able to prove this by examining the surviving works of [Irenaeus](#) (born 130), who lived in days before anyone felt it was necessary to list the approved books. He quotes as Scripture all of the books and only the books that appear in the list published on another continent and sixty years later by Origen.

It is evident that the elders of each congregation had approved certain writings and rejected others as they became available, and it turned out, by the grace of God, that most of the churches were by the year 170 in agreement, having approved the same books independently. Prominent teachers were also influential in this process. About that time bishops began to prevail in the Church, as governors of groups of churches, and they simply ratified with these lists the results thus arrived at. The approved books were then called the "canon" of Scripture, "canon" being a Greek word meaning "rod" or "ruler." These books constituted the standard *rule of faith* for all the churches. We must not imagine that the canon was imposed by ecclesiastical authorities. The canon grew up by many independent decisions of elders who were responsible for their congregations alone.

**The elders received apostolic writings as authoritative.** Then we must ask, how did the elders of the churches decide which writings should be read in church as authoritative? The answer is simple: They received the writings of the *apostles* and their closest companions, and the writings endorsed by them. The entire Old Testament was received by the implicit endorsement of the apostles. The Gospel of Matthew was written by an apostle. The Gospel of Mark was written by the apostle Peter's closest disciple. The Gospel of Luke was written by the apostle Paul's close companion. The Gospel of John was written by an apostle. The Acts of the Apostles was written by Paul's close companion. Thirteen letters were received from Paul. The epistle to the Hebrews was received as from Paul. The epistle of James comes from the brother of the Lord, who exercised authority in Jerusalem with the apostles. The epistle of Jude was from another brother of the Lord. The two epistles of Peter are from an apostle. The three epistles of John are from an apostle, who also wrote the Revelation. We may ask, How did they know that these writings were not forgeries? The churches did not receive them from strangers. These documents were hand-delivered by friends of the apostles to elders who also knew the apostles personally. Forgeries would be obvious, especially if the writing promoted [strange doctrines](#).

**Minor disagreements in earliest days.** Some disagreements arose along with the rise of heresies. The elders of the churches became wary, and even began to doubt some of the writings they had formerly received as copies from other churches. Writings which came under question were Hebrews, James, Jude, 2 Peter, 2 and 3 John, and the Revelation of John. The reasons for doubt were various. The author of Hebrews does not identify himself. James was not an apostle, and his message seemed to contradict Paul's message. Jude was not an apostle, and he quotes books which the churches did not receive as Scripture. 2 Peter, it seems, was not widely distributed at first. The author of 2 and 3 John does not identify himself plainly. The author of the Revelation identifies himself as John, but does not say that he is the *apostle* John, and the style of the book is different from the Gospel of John. Nevertheless, the majority of churches received and used these books without questioning them, *while vigorously rejecting all others*.

**Universal agreement in modern times.** Today we have no good reason for doubting the canon of the New Testament. It would be wrong for me to suggest that everyone needs to investigate these matters and decide for himself which books he will receive as Scripture, without any respect for the decisions of the early churches. We are not in such a position to judge as the early church was, and we are bound to respect the well-nigh unanimous opinion of so many Christians of the past. As Paul says to the Corinthian innovators, "What! Was it from you that the word of God went forth? Or came it unto you alone?" Against such presumption he recommends that which is done "in all the churches of the saints." (14:33b-36). Recently some scholars have tried to promote strange doctrines by suggesting that some of our canonical writings are not genuine, and that other writings such as the *Gospel of Thomas* are equally valid "interpretations" of the life and teachings of Jesus Christ. I have studied their arguments, and I can assure you that they are not worth listening to.

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[Bible Research](#) > [Canon](#) > Introduction



# The Canon of the Bible

All Christians realize that if God has revealed Himself by communicating His will to man, man must be able to know with assurance where that revelation lies. Hence the need for a list (i.e. canon) of books of the Bible. In other words, man needs to know without error (i.e. infallibly) what the books of the Bible are. There must be an authority which will make that decision.

The canon of the Bible refers to the definitive list of the books which are considered to be divine revelation and included therein. A canon distinguishes what is revealed and divine from what is not revealed and human. "Canon" (Greek *kanon*) means a reed; a straight rod or bar; a measuring stick; something serving to determine, rule, or measure. Because God did not explicitly reveal what books are the inspired books of the Bible, title by title, to anyone, we must look to His guidance in discovering the canon of the Bible.

Jesus has told us that he has not revealed all truths to us.

Jn 16:12-13

I have much more to tell you, but you cannot bear it now. But when he comes, the Spirit of truth, he will guide you to all truth.

Jesus then told us how he was planning to assist us in knowing other truths.

Jn 14:16-17

And I will ask the Father, and he will give you another Advocate to be with you always, the Spirit of truth, which the world cannot accept, because it neither sees nor knows it. But you know it, because it remains with you, and will be in you.

Jn 15:26

When the Advocate comes whom I will send you from the Father, the Spirit of truth that proceeds from the Father, he will testify to me.

The New Testament writers sensed how they handled truth-bearing under the influence of the Holy Spirit, the Spirit of Truth.

1 Cor 15:3-4

For I handed on (*paredoka*) to you as of first importance what I also received ...

2 Tim 2:2

And what you heard from me through many witnesses entrust (*parathou*) to faithful people who will have the ability to teach others as well.

There was a constant history of faithful people from Paul's time through the Apostolic and Post Apostolic Church.

Melito, bishop of Sardis, an ancient city of Asia Minor (see Rev 3), c. 170 AD produced the first known Christian attempt at an Old Testament canon. His list maintains the Septuagint order of books but contains only the Old Testament protocanonicals minus the Book of Esther.

The Council of Laodicea, c. 360, produced a list of books similar to today's canon. This was one of the Church's earliest decisions on a canon.

Pope Damasus, 366-384, in his Decree, listed the books of today's canon.

The Council of Rome, 382, was the forum which prompted Pope Damasus' Decree.

Bishop Exuperius of Toulouse wrote to Pope Innocent I in 405 requesting a list of canonical books. Pope Innocent listed the present canon.

The Council of Hippo, a local north Africa council of bishops created the list of the Old and New Testament books in 393 which is the same as the Roman Catholic list today.

The Council of Carthage, a local north Africa council of bishops created the same list of canonical books in 397. This is the council which many Protestant and Evangelical Christians take as the authority for the New Testament canon of books. The Old Testament canon from the same council is identical to Roman Catholic canon today. Another Council of Carthage in 419 offered the same list of canonical books.

Since the Roman Catholic Church does not define truths unless errors abound on the matter, Roman Catholic Christians look to the Council of Florence, an ecumenical council in 1441 for the first definitive list of canonical books.

The final infallible definition of canonical books for Roman Catholic Christians came from the Council of Trent in 1556 in the face of the errors of the Reformers who rejected seven Old Testament books from the canon of scripture to that time.

There was no canon of scripture in the early Church; there was no Bible. The Bible is the book of the Church; she is not the Church of the Bible. It was the Church--her leadership, faithful people--guided by the authority of the Spirit of Truth which discovered the books inspired by God in their writing. The Church did not *create* the canon; she *discerned* the canon. Fixed canons of the Old and New Testaments, hence the Bible, were not known much before the end of the 2nd and early 3rd century.

Catholic Christians together with Protestant and Evangelical Christians hold the same *canon of the New Testament*, 27 books, all having been originally written in the Greek language.

Catholic Christians accept *the longer Old Testament canon*, 46 books, from the Greek Septuagint (LXX) translation of the Alexandrian Canon.

Protestant and Evangelical Christians, from the Reformers onward, accept *the shorter Old Testament canon*, 39 books, from the Hebrew Palestinian Canon. Jews have the same canon as Protestants.

Canonical books are those books which have been acknowledged as belonging to the list of books the Church considers to be inspired and to contain a rule of faith and morals. Some criteria used to determine canonicity were

- special relation to God, i.e., inspiration;
- apostolic origin;
- used in Church services, i.e., used by the community of believers guided by the Holy Spirit.

Other terms for canonical books should be distinguished: the protocanonical books, deuterocanonical books, and the apocryphal books.

The *protocanonical* (from the Greek *proto* meaning first) books are those books of the Bible that were admitted into the canon of the Bible with little or no debate (e.g., the Pentateuch of the Old Testament and the Gospels)

The *deuterocanonical* (from the Greek *deutero* meaning second) books are those books of the Bible that were under discussion for a while until doubts about their canonicity were resolved (e.g. Sirach and Baruch of the Old Testament, and the Johannine epistles of the New Testament).

The *apocryphal* (from the Greek *apokryphos* meaning hidden) books have multiple meanings:

- complimentary meaning - that the sacred books were too exalted for the general public;
- pejorative meaning - that the orthodoxy of the books were questioned;
- heretical meaning - that the books were forbidden to be read; and lastly
- neutral meaning - simply noncanonical books, the meaning the word has today.

Another word, *pseudepigrapha* (from the Greek meaning false writing) is used for works clearly considered to be false.



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By [Paul Flanagan](#) and [Robert Schihl](#).

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# The Canon of the New Testament

By F. F. Bruce

Chapter 3 in *The New Testament Documents: Are They Reliable?* (5th edition; Leicester: Intervarsity Press, 1959).

Even when we have come to a conclusion about the date and origin of the individual books of the New Testament, another question remains to be answered. How did the New Testament itself as a collection of writings come into being? Who collected the writings, and on what principles? What circumstances led to the fixing of a list, or canon, of authoritative books?

The historic Christian belief is that the Holy Spirit, who controlled the writing of the individual books, also controlled their selection and collection, thus continuing to fulfil our Lord's promise that He would guide His disciples into all the truth. This, however, is something that is to be discerned by spiritual insight, and not by historical research. Our object is to find out what historical research reveals about the origin of the New Testament canon. Some will tell us that we receive the twenty-seven books of the New Testament on the authority of the Church; but even if we do, how did the Church come to recognise these twenty-seven and no others as worthy of being placed on a level of inspiration and authority with the Old Testament canon?

The matter is oversimplified in Article VI of the Thirty Nine Articles, when it says: 'In the name of the holy Scripture we do understand those canonical Books of the Old and New Testament, of whose authority was never any doubt in the Church.' For, leaving on one side the question of the Old Testament canon, it is not quite accurate to say that there has never been any doubt in the Church of any of our New Testament books. A few of the shorter Epistles (e.g. 2 Peter, 2 and 3 John, James, Jude) and the Revelation were much longer in being accepted in some parts than in others; while elsewhere books which we do not now include in the New Testament were received as canonical. Thus the Codex Sinaiticus included the 'Epistle of Barnabas' and the Shepherd of Hermas, a Roman work of about AD 110 or earlier, while the Codex Alexandrinus included the writings known as the First and Second Epistles of Clement; and the inclusion of these works alongside the biblical writings probably indicates that they were accorded some degree of canonical status.

The earliest list of New Testament books of which we have definite knowledge was drawn up at Rome by the heretic Marcion about 140. Marcion distinguished the inferior Creator-God of the Old Testament from the God and Father revealed in Christ, and believed that the Church ought to jettison all that appertained to the former. This 'theological anti-semitism' involved the rejecting not only of the entire Old Testament but also of those parts of the New Testament which seemed to him to be infected with Judaism. So Marcion's canon consisted of two parts: (a) an expurgated edition of the third Gospel, which is the least Jewish of the Gospels, being written by the Gentile Luke; and (b) ten of the Pauline Epistles (the three 'Pastoral Epistles' being omitted). Marcion's list, however, does not represent the current verdict of the Church but a deliberate aberration from it.

Another early list, also of Roman provenance, dated about the end of the second century, is that commonly called the 'Muratorian Fragment,' because it was first published in Italy in 1740 by the antiquarian Cardinal L. A. Muratori. It is unfortunately mutilated at the beginning, but it evidently mentioned Matthew and Mark, because it refers to Luke as the third Gospel; then it mentions John, Acts, 'Paul's nine letters to churches and four to individuals (Philemon, Titus, 1 and 2 Timothy), Jude, two Epistles of John, and the Apocalypse of John and that of Peter.' The Shepherd of Hermas is mentioned as worthy to be read (i.e. in church) but not to be included in the number of prophetic or apostolic writings.

The first steps in the formation of a canon of authoritative Christian books, worthy to stand beside the Old Testament canon, which was the Bible of our Lord and His apostles, appear to have been taken about the beginning of the second century, when there is evidence for the circulation of two collections of Christian writings in the Church.

At a very early date it appears that the four Gospels were united in one collection. They must have been brought together very soon after the writing of the Gospel according to John. This fourfold collection was known originally as 'The Gospel' in the singular, not 'The Gospels' in the plural; there was only one Gospel, narrated in four records, distinguished as 'according to Matthew,' 'according to Mark,' and so on. About AD 115 Ignatius, bishop of Antioch, refers to 'The Gospel' as an authoritative writing, and as he knew more than one of the four 'Gospels' it may well be that by 'The Gospel' he means the fourfold collection which went by that name.

About AD 170 an Assyrian Christian named Tatian turned the fourfold Gospel into a continuous narrative or 'Harmony of the Gospels,' which for long was the favourite if not the official form of the fourfold Gospel in the Assyrian Church. It was distinct from the four Gospels in the Old Syriac version. It is not certain whether Tatian originally composed his Harmony, usually known as the Diatessaron, in Greek or in Syriac; but as it seems to have been compiled at Rome its original language was probably Greek, and a fragment of Tatian's Diatessaron in Greek was discovered in the year 1933 at Dura-Europos on the Euphrates. At any rate, it was given to the Assyrian Christians in a Syriac form when Tatian returned home from Rome, and this Syriac Diatessaron remained the 'Authorised Version' of the Gospels for them until it was replaced by the Peshitta or 'simple' version in the fifth century.

By the time of Irenaeus, who, though a native of Asia Minor, was bishop of Lyons in Gaul about AD 180, the idea of a fourfold Gospel had become so axiomatic in the Church at large that he can refer to it as an established and recognised fact as obvious as the four cardinal points of the compass or the four winds:

For as there are four quarters of the world in which we live, and four universal winds, and as the Church is dispersed over all the earth, and the gospel is the pillar and base of the Church and the breath of life, so it is natural that it should have four pillars, breathing immortality from every quarter and kindling the life of men anew. Whence it is manifest that the Word, the architect of all things, who sits upon the cherubim and holds all things together, having been manifested to men, has given us the gospel in fourfold form, but held together by one Spirit.

When the four Gospels were gathered together in one volume, it meant the severance of the two parts of Luke's history. When Luke and Acts were thus separated one or two modifications were apparently introduced into the text at the end of Luke and the beginning of Acts. Originally Luke seems to have left all mention of the ascension to his second treatise; now the words 'and was carried up into heaven' were added in Luke xiv. 51, to round off the narrative, and in consequence 'was taken up' was added in Acts i. 2. Thus the inconsistencies which some have detected between the accounts of the ascension in Luke and Acts are most likely due to these adjustments made when the two books were separated from each other.

Acts, however, naturally shared the authority and prestige of the third Gospel, being the work of the same author, and was apparently received as canonical by all except Marcion and his followers. Indeed, Acts occupied a very important place in the New Testament canon, being the pivotal book of the New Testament, as Harnack called it, since it links the Gospels with the Epistles, and, by its record of the conversion, call, and missionary service of Paul, showed clearly how real an apostolic authority lay behind the Pauline Epistles.

The *corpus Paulinum*, or collection of Paul's writings, was brought together about the same time as the collecting of the fourfold Gospel. As the Gospel collection was designated by the Greek word *Euangelion*, so the Pauline collection was designated by the one word *Apostolos*, each letter being distinguished as 'To the Romans,' 'First to the Corinthians,' and so on. Before long, the anonymous Epistle to the Hebrews was bound up with the Pauline writings. Acts, as a matter of convenience, came to be bound up with the 'General Epistles' (those of Peter, James, John and Jude).

The only books about which there was any substantial doubt after the middle of the second century were some of those which come at the end of our New Testament. Origen (185-254) mentions the four Gospels, the Acts, the thirteen Paulines, 1 Peter, 1 John and Revelation as acknowledged by all; he says that Hebrews, 2 Peter, 2 and 3 John, James and Jude, with the 'Epistle of Barnabas,' the Shepherd of Hermas, the Didache, and the 'Gospel according to the Hebrews,' were disputed by some. Eusebius (c. 265-340) mentions as generally acknowledged all the books of our New Testament except James, Jude, 2 Peter, 2 and 3 John, which were disputed by some, but recognised by the majority. Athanasius in 367 lays down the twenty-seven books of our New Testament as alone canonical; shortly afterwards Jerome and Augustine followed his example in the West. The process farther east took a little longer; it was not until c. 508 that 2 Peter, 2 and 3 John, Jude and Revelation were included in a version of the Syriac Bible in addition to the other twenty-two books.

For various reasons it was necessary for the Church to know exactly what books were divinely authoritative. The Gospels, recording 'all that Jesus began both to do and to teach,' could not be regarded as one whit lower in authority than the Old Testament books. And the teaching of the apostles in the Acts and Epistles was regarded as vested with His authority. It was natural, then, to accord to the apostolic writings of the new covenant the same



degree of homage as was already paid to the prophetic writings of the old. Thus Justin Martyr, about AD 150, classes the 'Memoirs of the Apostles' along with the writings of the prophets, saying that both were read in meetings of Christians (*Apol* i. 67). For the Church did not, in spite of the breach with Judaism, repudiate the authority of the Old Testament; but, following the example of Christ and His apostles, received it as the Word of God. Indeed, so much did they make the Septuagint their own that, although it was originally a translation of the Hebrew Scriptures into Greek for Greek-speaking Jews before the time of Christ, the Jews left the Septuagint to the Christians, and a fresh Greek version of the Old Testament was made for Greek speaking Jews.

It was specially important to determine which books might be used for the establishment of Christian doctrine, and which might most confidently be appealed to in disputes with heretics. In particular, when Marcion drew up his canon about AD 140, it was necessary for the orthodox churches to know exactly what the true canon was, and this helped to speed up a process which had already begun. It is wrong, however, to talk or write as if the Church first began to draw up a canon after Marcion had published his.

Other circumstances which demanded clear definition of those books which possessed divine authority were the necessity of deciding which books should be read in church services (though certain books might be suitable for this purpose which could not be used to settle doctrinal questions), and the necessity of knowing which books might and might not be handed over on demand to the imperial police in times of persecution without incurring the guilt of sacrilege.

One thing must be emphatically stated. The New Testament books did not become authoritative for the Church because they were formally included in a canonical list; on the contrary, the Church included them in her canon because she already regarded them as divinely inspired, recognising their innate worth and general apostolic authority, direct or indirect. The first ecclesiastical councils to classify the canonical books were both held in North Africa — at Hippo Regius in 393 and at Carthage in 397 — but what these councils did was not to impose something new upon the Christian communities but to codify what was already the general practice of those communities.

There are many theological questions arising out of the history of the canon which we cannot go into here; but for a practical demonstration that the Church made the right choice one need only compare the books of our New Testament with the various early documents collected by M. R. James in his *Apocryphal New Testament* (1924), or even with the writings of the Apostolic Fathers, to realise the superiority of our New Testament books to these others.

A word may be added about the 'Gospel according to the Hebrews' which, as was mentioned above, Origen listed as one of the books which in his day were disputed by some. This work, which circulated in Transjordan and Egypt among the Jewish Christian groups called Ebionites, bore some affinity to the canonical Gospel of Matthew. Perhaps it was an independent expansion of an Aramaic document related to our canonical Matthew. It was known to some of the early Christian Fathers in a Greek version.

Jerome (347-420) identified this 'Gospel according to the Hebrews' with one which he found in Syria, called the Gospel of the Nazarene, and which he mistakenly thought at first was the Hebrew (or Aramaic) original of Matthew. It is possible that he was also mistaken in identifying it with the gospel according to the Hebrews; the Nazarene Gospel found by Jerome (and translated by him into Greek and Latin) may simply have been an Aramaic translation of the canonical Greek Matthew. In any case, the Gospel according to the Hebrews and the Gospel of the Nazarenes both had some relation to Matthew, and they are to be distinguished from the multitude of apocryphal Gospels which were also current in those days, and which have no bearing on our present historical study. These, like several books of apocryphal 'Acts,' and similar writings, are almost entirely pure romances. One of the books of apocryphal Acts, however, the 'Acts of Paul,' while admittedly a romance of the second century, is interesting because of a pen-portrait of Paul which it contains, and which, because of its vigorous and unconventional character, was thought by Sir William Ramsay to embody a tradition of the apostle's appearance preserved in Asia Minor. Paul is described as 'a man small in size, with meeting eyebrows, with a rather large nose, bald-headed, bowlegged, strongly built, full of grace, for at times he looked like a man, and at times he had the face of an angel'.



# The Formation of the Canon of the New Testament

By B.B. Warfield

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In order to obtain a correct understanding of what is called the formation of the Canon of the New Testament, it is necessary to begin by fixing very firmly in our minds one fact which is obvious enough when attention is once called to it. That is, that the Christian church did not require to form for itself the idea of a "canon" — or, as we should more commonly call it, of a "Bible" — that is, of a collection of books given of God to be the authoritative rule of faith and practice. It inherited this idea from the Jewish church, along with the thing itself, the Jewish Scriptures, or the "Canon of the Old Testament." The church did not grow up by natural law: it was founded. And the authoritative teachers sent forth by Christ to found His church, carried with them, as their most precious possession, a body of divine Scriptures, which they imposed on the church that they founded as its code of law. No reader of the New Testament can need proof of this; on every page of that book is spread the evidence that from the very beginning the Old Testament was as cordially recognized as law by the Christian as by the Jew. The Christian church thus was never without a "Bible" or a "canon."

But the Old Testament books were not the only ones which the apostles (by Christ's own appointment the authoritative founders of the church) imposed upon the infant churches, as their authoritative rule of faith and practice. No more authority dwelt in the prophets of the old covenant than in themselves, the apostles, who had been "made sufficient as ministers of a new covenant" [2 Cor. 3:6]; for (as one of themselves argued) "if that which passeth away was with glory, much more that which remaineth is in glory." [2 Cor. 3:11] Accordingly not only was the gospel they delivered, in their own estimation, itself a divine revelation, but it was also preached "in the Holy Ghost" (I Pet. i. 12); not merely the matter of it, but the very words in which it was clothed were "of the Holy Spirit" (I Cor. ii. 13). Their own commands were, therefore, of divine authority (I Thess. iv. 2), and their writings were the depository of these commands (II Thess. ii. 15). "If any man obeyeth not our word by this epistle," says Paul to one church (II Thess. iii. 14), "note that man, that ye have no company with him." To another he makes it the test of a Spirit-led man to recognize that what he was writing to them was "the commandments of the Lord" (I Cor. xiv. 37). Inevitably, such writings, making so awful a claim on their acceptance, were received by the infant churches as of a quality equal to that of the old "Bible"; placed alongside of its older books as an additional part of the one law of God; and read as such in their meetings for worship — a practice which moreover was required by the apostles (I Thess. v. 27; Col. iv. 16; Rev. i. 3). In the apprehension, therefore, of the earliest churches, the "Scriptures" were not a closed but an increasing "canon." Such they had been from the beginning, as they gradually grew in number from Moses to Malachi; and such they were to continue as long as there should remain among the churches "men of God who spake as they were moved by the Holy Ghost."

We say that this immediate placing of the new books — given the church under the seal of apostolic authority — among the Scriptures already established as such, was inevitable. It is also historically evinced from the very beginning. Thus the apostle Peter, writing in A.D. 68, speaks of Paul's numerous letters not in contrast with the Scriptures, but as among the Scriptures and in contrast with "the other Scriptures" (II Pet. iii.16) — that is, of course, those of the Old Testament. In like manner the apostle Paul combines, as if it were the most natural thing in the world, the book of Deuteronomy and the Gospel of Luke under the common head of "Scripture" (I Tim. v.18): "For the Scripture saith, Thou shalt not muzzle the ox when he treadeth out the corn" [Deut. xxv. 4]; and, "The laborer is worthy of his hire" (Luke x. 7). The line of such quotations is never broken in Christian literature. Polycarp in A.D. 115 unites the Psalms and Ephesians in exactly similar manner: "In the sacred books ... as it is said in these Scriptures, 'Be ye angry and sin not,' and 'Let not the sun go down upon your wrath.'" So, a few years later, the so-called second letter of Clement, after quoting Isaiah, adds (ii. 4): "And another Scripture, however, says, 'I came not to call the righteous, but sinners'" — quoting from Matthew — a book which Barnabas (circa 97-106 A.D.) had already adduced as Scripture. After this such quotations are common.

What needs emphasis at present about these facts is that they obviously are not evidences of a gradually-heightening estimate of the New Testament books, originally received on a lower level and just beginning to be tentatively accounted Scripture; they are conclusive evidences rather of the estimation of the New Testament books from the very beginning as Scripture, and of their attachment as Scripture to the other Scriptures already in hand. The early Christians did not, then, first form a rival "canon" of "new books" which came only gradually to be accounted as of equal divinity and authority with the "old books"; they received new book after new book from the apostolical circle, as equally "Scripture" with the old books, and added them one by one to the collection of old books as additional Scriptures, until at length the new books thus added were numerous enough to be looked upon as another section of the Scriptures.

The earliest name given to this new section of Scripture was framed on the model of the name by which what we know as the Old Testament was then known. Just as it was called "The Law and the Prophets and the Psalms" (or "the Hagiographa"), or more briefly "The Law and the Prophets," or even more briefly still "The Law"; so the enlarged Bible was called "The Law and the Prophets, with the Gospels and the Apostles" (so Clement of Alexandria, *Strom.* vi. 11, 88; Tertullian, *De Prms. Men* 36), or most briefly "The Law and the Gospel" (so Claudius Apolinaris, Irenaeus); while the new books apart were called "The Gospel and the Apostles," or most briefly of all "The Gospel." This earliest name for the new Bible, with all that it involves as to its relation to the old and briefer Bible, is traceable as far back as Ignatius (A.D. 115), who makes use of it repeatedly (e.g., *ad Philad.* 5; *ad Smyrn.* 7). In one passage he gives us a hint of the controversies which the enlarged Bible of the Christians aroused among the Judaizers (*ad Philad.* 6). "When I heard some saying," he writes, "'Unless I find it in the Old [Books] I will not believe the Gospel' on my saying, 'It is written.' they answered, 'That is the question.' To me, however, Jesus Christ is the Old [Books]; his cross and death and resurrection and the faith which is by him, the undefiled Old [Books] — by which I wish, by your prayers, to be justified. The priests indeed are good, but the High Priest better," etc. Here Ignatius appeals to the "Gospel" as Scripture, and the Judaizers object, receiving from him the answer in effect which Augustine afterward formulated in the well known saying that the New Testament lies hidden in the Old and the Old Testament is first made clear in the New. What we need now to observe, however, is that to Ignatius the New Testament was not a different book from the Old Testament, but part of the one body of Scripture with it; an accretion, so to speak, which had grown upon it.

This is the testimony of all the early witnesses — even those which speak for the distinctively Jewish-Christian church. For example, that curious Jewish-Christian writing, "The Testaments of the XII. Patriarchs" (*Beni.* 11), tells us, under the cover of an *ex post facto* prophecy, that the "work and word" of Paul, i.e., confessedly the book of Acts and Paul's Epistles, "shall be written in the Holy Books," i.e., as is understood by all, made a part of the existent Bible. So even in the Talmud, in a scene intended to ridicule a "bishop" of the first century, he is represented as finding Galatians by "sinking himself deeper" into the same "Book" which contained the Law of Moses (*Babl. Shabbath*, 116 a and b). The details cannot be entered into here. Let it suffice to say that, from the evidence of the fragments which alone have been preserved to us of the Christian writings of that very early time, it appears that from the beginning of the second century (and that is from the end of the apostolic age) a collection (Ignatius, II Clement) of "New Books" (Ignatius), called the "Gospel and Apostles" (Ignatius, Marcion), was already a part of the "Oracles" of God (Polycarp, Papias, II Clement), or "Scriptures" (I Tim., II Pet., Barn., Polycarp, II Clement), or the "Holy Books" or "Bible" (Testt. XII. Patt.).

The number of books included in this added body of New Books, at the opening of the second century, cannot be satisfactorily determined by the evidence of these fragments alone. The section of it called the "Gospel" included Gospels written by "the apostles and their companions" (Justin), which



beyond legitimate question were our four Gospels now received. The section called "the Apostles" contained the book of Acts (The Testt. XII. Patt.) and epistles of Paul, John, Peter and James. The evidence from various quarters is indeed enough to show that the collection in general use contained all the books which we at present receive, with the possible exceptions of Jude, II and III John and Philemon. And it is more natural to suppose that failure of very early evidence for these brief booklets is due to their insignificant size rather than to their nonacceptance.

It is to be borne in mind, however, that the extent of the collection may have — and indeed is historically shown actually to have varied in different localities. The Bible was circulated only in handcopies, slowly and painfully made; and an incomplete copy, obtained say at Ephesus in A.D. 68, would be likely to remain for many years the Bible of the church to which it was conveyed; and might indeed become the parent of other copies, incomplete like itself, and thus the means of providing a whole district with incomplete Bibles. Thus, when we inquire after the history of the New Testament Canon we need to distinguish such questions as these: (1) When was the New Testament Canon completed? (2) When did any one church acquire a completed canon? (3) When did the completed canon — the complete Bible — obtain universal circulation and acceptance? (4) On what ground and evidence did the churches with incomplete Bibles accept the remaining books when they were made known to them?

The Canon of the New Testament was completed when the last authoritative book was given to any church by the apostles, and that was when John wrote the Apocalypse, about A.D. 98. Whether the church of Ephesus, however, had a completed Canon when it received the Apocalypse, or not, would depend on whether there was any epistle, say that of Jude, which had not yet reached it with authenticating proof of its apostolicity. There is room for historical investigation here. Certainly the whole Canon was not universally received by the churches till somewhat later. The Latin church of the second and third centuries did not quite know what to do with the Epistle to the Hebrews. The Syrian churches for some centuries may have lacked the lesser of the Catholic Epistles and Revelation. But from the time of Irenaeus down, the church at large had the whole Canon as we now possess it. And though a section of the church may not yet have been satisfied of the apostolicity of a certain book or of certain books; and though afterwards doubts may have arisen in sections of the church as to the apostolicity of certain books (as e.g. of Revelation): yet in no case was it more than a respectable minority of the church which was slow in receiving, or which came afterward to doubt, the credentials of any of the books that then as now constituted the Canon of the New Testament accepted by the church at large. And in every case the principle on which a book was accepted, or doubts against it laid aside, was the historical tradition of apostolicity.

Let it, however, be clearly understood that it was not exactly apostolic authorship which in the estimation of the earliest churches, constituted a book a portion of the "canon." Apostolic authorship was, indeed, early confounded with canonicity. It was doubt as to the apostolic authorship of Hebrews, in the West, and of James and Jude, apparently, which underlay the slowness of the inclusion of these books in the "canon" of certain churches. But from the beginning it was not so. The principle of canonicity was not apostolic authorship, but imposition by the apostles as "law." Hence Tertullian's name for the "canon" is "instrumentum"; and he speaks of the Old and New Instrument as we would of the Old and New Testament. That the apostles so imposed the Old Testament on the churches which they founded — as their "Instrument," or "Law," or "Canon" — can be denied by none. And in imposing new books on the same churches, by the same apostolical authority, they did not confine themselves to books of their own composition. It is the Gospel according to Luke, a man who was not an apostle, which Paul parallels in I Tim. v. 18 with Deuteronomy as equally "Scripture" with it, in the first extant quotation of a New Testament book as Scripture. The Gospels which constituted the first division of the New Books, — of "The Gospel and the Apostles," — Justin tells us were "written by the apostles and their companions." The authority of the apostles, as by divine appointment founders of the church, was embodied in whatever books they imposed on the church as law, not merely in those they themselves had written.

The early churches, in short, received, as we receive, into the New Testament all the books historically evinced to them as given by the apostles to the churches as their code of law; and we must not mistake the historical evidences of the slow circulation and authentication of these books over the widely-extended church, evidence of slowness of the "canonization" of these books by the authority or taste of the church itself.



# The Formation of the New Testament Canon

By Stephen Voorwinde

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After almost 2000 years of church history how can Christians be sure that they have the right Bible? Can we indeed be absolutely certain that we have exactly the right books in the Bible — no more and no less? As our standard of faith and practice can we confidently appeal to the canon of Scripture as a collection of authoritative writings to which nothing can be added and from which nothing can be taken away? What if archaeology uncovered an ancient epistle of Paul or another apostolic writer? Could such a hitherto lost document be added to the canon? While we may dismiss such a question as hypothetical, there are similar questions which are only too painfully relevant in the life of the church today. Can God speak authoritatively today, and if so should such revelation be regarded as on a par with Scripture — or perhaps even be added to Scripture? In other words, is the canon closed? Moreover, whence do we have the information about which books are canonical?

These are some of the urgent questions to which a thoughtful consideration of our topic will inevitably lead. They are not only issues of abiding theological interest, but can at times also be matters of apologetic importance and even of pressing pastoral concern. Here we touch upon the very basis of our Christian faith and life, and it is vital that these foundations be secure. But how can this be established? How can we espouse a view of Scripture which *ipso facto* cannot be proved from Scripture itself?

To begin our investigation we will need to have a sound understanding of the terminology. Our English word "canon" is a loan-word from the Latin *canon*, which in turn was derived from the Greek *kanon*. For our purposes it is important to trace the linguistic development of the term. While the Greek word *kanon* does occur in the New Testament it cannot be translated by "canon" in English. In each case it is more suitably translated "rule" or "standard" (2 Cor.10:13,15,16; Gal.6:16; Phil.3:16). It will be noted that all the occurrences of the word are in Paul's writings, and in none of these instances is he referring to the canon of Scripture. That was to be a much later development. Movement in this direction occurred when "in the second century in the Christian church *kanon* came to stand for revealed truth, rule of faith."<sup>1</sup> It was not until the fourth century that the church began to refer to the Scriptures of the Old and New Testaments as *ho kanon* ("the canon"). A parallel development took place in the history of the Latin term. In ecclesiastical Latin, *canon* came to mean "a catalogue of sacred writings."<sup>2</sup> The term "canon" as we use it when referring to the canon of Scripture is therefore not a use of the term in its biblical sense, but conforms to ecclesiastical usage from the fourth century onwards. This is also the way the word was used at the time of the Reformation. Particularly in the Reformed confessions the term is used almost exclusively of the "rule," "norm" or "established list" of the Scriptures.<sup>3</sup> In these doctrinal statements it is closely conjoined to such concepts as "inspiration," "authority" and "the regulation, foundation and confirmation of our faith." The idea of normativity comes very much to the forefront.

This immediately raises an important question. Whence is this normativity derived? What is its basis? These questions are far more difficult for the New Testament than for the Old. In the case of the Old Testament it can be convincingly demonstrated that Jesus placed his infallible seal of approval upon the canon as we now have it (Lk.24:25-27,44-45). His reference to "the Law of Moses and the Prophets and the Psalms" reflects the traditional threefold division of the Hebrew canon. On this point there was no quarrel between him and the Pharisees. While the "closedness" of the Old Testament canon at the time of Jesus has become the subject of recent theological debate,<sup>4</sup> it is fair to say that the traditional position has been challenged, but not shaken. Jesus and his Jewish contemporaries agreed on the limits of the Old Testament canon. In the nature of the case such a statement of divine approval is impossible for the New Testament. We have no *post hoc* pronouncement from Christ to the effect that these 27 books, and these only, are authoritative, inspired and canonical. So how do we proceed? On what basis do we define the canon? On what or whose authority can it be established? How can we rest assured that the right books have been included? These questions have been tackled from a number of different perspectives — theological and historical, *a priori* and *a posteriori*, presuppositionally and evidentially. For a most satisfying approach it is perhaps best not to make these contrasts mutually exclusive, not to pit them against one another in an unhelpful way. To get the full picture we cannot divorce the historical evidence from our theological presuppositions. We cannot separate the *a priori* of our faith from the *a posteriori* of historical development. To do justice to the largeness of the question we will need to adopt a rather wide approach.

## A. Historical Considerations

We have already seen that the Greek word *kanon* was not applied to the New Testament books before the middle of the fourth century.<sup>5</sup> However, this does not mean that the idea of the canon did not exist earlier. Church history, from its beginnings till the end of the fourth century, is characterized by an increasing awareness of the canonicity of its sacred New Testament writings. In the words of Herman Ridderbos, "the history of the Canon is the process of the growing consciousness of the Church concerning its ecumenical foundation."<sup>6</sup> From its earliest days the Christian community was aware that it had a body of writings equal in authority to the Old Testament and equally revelatory in character.<sup>7</sup> However, the recognition of a closed collection of documents above all other literature was a gradual process that was not complete till the end of the fourth century.<sup>8</sup> From the beginning Christians regarded the Jewish canon as distinctively their own. The body of literature which developed in their midst did not replace but supplemented the Jewish canon. Around 200 AD we already find the terms "Old Testament" and "New Testament," *palaiā diatheke* and *kainē diatheke*.

The New Testament is not to be treated as a book that dropped straight down from heaven, that came *senkrecht von oben*. Its recognition by the Church was not immediate, but was historically qualified. It is to this process of a gradual and ever more precise canonical awareness that we must now devote our attention.

### 1. The New Testament Canon before 140

#### (a) An Awareness Within the New Testament Itself

At times the New Testament writers seemed plainly aware that they or others from amongst themselves were writing Scripture, e.g. 2 Pet.3:16 refers to Paul's letters and "the rest of the Scriptures." Especially the Book of Revelation seems rather self-consciously Scriptural (e.g. 1:3; 22:18,19). But these are mere "hints" compared to the authoritative tone conveyed by certain New Testament concepts. Three terms stand out:

(i) "Apostle":<sup>9</sup> The concept of "apostle" is defined especially by the idea of authorization, by the transmission of definite powers. The apostles are Christ's representatives (Mt.10:40; cf. Jn.13:20). In a very special and exclusive manner he entrusted them with the preaching of the Gospel. He also endowed them with the Spirit of truth who would guide them into all the truth (Jn.14:26; 15:26; 16:13-15). They were thus the transmitters of revelation (Heb.2:4). The salvation that appeared in Jesus, first proclaimed by the Lord himself, was validly attested to by the apostles.

(ii) "Witness": The apostles were witnesses of the salvation revealed in Christ. This concept should be understood in a forensic way. The apostles were eyewitnesses and they bear this testimony for the forum of the coming Church and the entire world. This testimony is both oral (preaching) and written



(New Testament documents).

(iii) "Tradition":<sup>10</sup> In the New Testament this is a very authoritative concept. It means 'what has been handed down with authority.' In apostolic times equal significance is given to oral and written proclamation. The New Testament writings "are partially the remains and fixation of a previous oral tradition."<sup>11</sup> The source of the New Testament tradition lies in the apostles, e.g. 1 Cor.15:1-4. Paul both receives and transmits tradition. A personal power is involved here, viz. that of the apostles. They had received authority from Christ to do this. The tradition of which the New Testament speaks is therefore not an unchanneled stream which is then perpetuated as the faith or theology of the Church. It is rather the authoritative proclamation entrusted to the apostles, as the witnesses of Christ and as the foundation of the Church.

Although the importance of apostolic witness and tradition is hard to exaggerate, the authority of the apostles should be seen in its proper perspective. B.B. Warfield gives more content to apostolic authority than is warranted by the New Testament itself. In his view the New Testament canon was imposed by the apostles on the Church. Thus the canon was not only complete but also fully and finally accepted by the end of the first century. In an article originally published in 1892 Warfield writes: "In every case the principle on which a book was accepted, or doubts about it laid aside, was the historical tradition of apostolicity." However, "the principle of canonicity was not apostolic authorship, but imposition by the apostles as 'law.'"<sup>12</sup> Warfield then further explains, "The authority of the apostles, as by divine appointment founders of the Church, was embodied in whatever books they imposed on the Church as law, not merely in those they themselves had written."<sup>13</sup> In his position Warfield is obviously taking apostolic authorship too far. Not only is it difficult to conceive how the apostles could impose books on the Church as law, there is no historical evidence for any such apostolic imposition. Perhaps this is the reason why Warfield's discussion does not proceed beyond the second century. He completely leaves out of the question the whole "recognition" element on the part of the Church. His view simply cannot account for the diversity of opinions regarding the limits of the New Testament which prevailed for decades and even for centuries.

Warfield's position certainly simplifies the canon question by making the New Testament a closed book by the end of the first century, but it fails to do justice to the historical facts. We must pay attention to the diversity of opinions that came to expression in the early church.

#### (b) The Apostolic Fathers

The Apostolic Fathers were more concerned with practical and moral issues than with theological reflection. The works of these early Christian writers contain no formulated doctrine of Scripture or canon, and yet there is much that is suggestive of later development.

(i) Clement of Rome: Writing in about the year 96 Clement emphasizes the importance of apostolic authority: "The apostles received the gospel for us from the Lord Jesus Christ; Jesus the Christ was sent forth from God. So then Christ is from God, and the apostles from Christ. Both, therefore, came of the will of God in good order."<sup>14</sup> His only specific references to the New Testament are from 1 Corinthians and Hebrews. However, there is evidence of his familiarity with a wider range of the canonical materials. Yet Clement has no formal theory of the New Testament canon. While the tradition that derives from Jesus and the apostles is authoritative, it is not authoritative in a specific form.

(ii) Ignatius of Antioch: Around 115 Ignatius stated that the teachings of the apostles are known through their writings. There is, however, no indication that he viewed the apostolic writings as Scripture parallel to the Old Testament. For him the issue is the authority of the revelation — not its form, whether oral or written.

(iii) Polycarp (d.155): Like Clement and Ignatius, Polycarp sees an integral unity between the Old Testament and the apostles. However, he moves beyond his predecessors in that for him the importance of the Old Testament has receded in favour of the increased esteem given to the writings of the apostles, particularly Paul.

(iv) The Epistle of Barnabas (ca.130): Most of this epistle is a polemical foray into interpreting the Old Testament. Barnabas wrestles with the problem of continuity/discontinuity between the Old and New Covenants. Generous use is made of the Old Covenant to show how it points to Christ. Barnabas indicates that as the problems of Old Testament interpretation grew, the Church would become more conscious of its literature as forming a complementary Scripture (the New Testament). He cites Matthew 22:14 with the formula "it is written."

(v) "Gospel" and "Apostle": According to F.F. Bruce,<sup>15</sup> in the early years of the second century two Christian collections of authoritative documents were current. One was called "The Gospel" (with sub-headings "According to Matthew," etc.). The other was "The Apostle," i.e. the Pauline corpus (with sub-headings "To the Romans," etc.). Soon these two parts were to be connected by the Book of Acts which brought the two collections together. The implications of this were significant, as Bruce explains:

So long as the fourfold Gospel and the Pauline collection circulated separately, one can hardly speak of a canon, even in embryo. The bringing together of the two collections into one was facilitated by the existence of Acts, the hinge which joined the two. ... Acts provided the central structure of an edifice which now took on the shape of the canon as we have received it.<sup>16</sup>

So, already at this early stage, the Church was making progress in the recognition of an authoritative collection of Christian books. Just before the middle of the second century something happened to speed up that progress and give it greater precision than had characterized it up until that time.

## 2. The New Testament Canon between 140 and 220

The early years of this period witnessed the rise of several strong heretical movements:

#### (a) Marcionism

About the year 140 the Roman church received a visit from Marcion, a native of Asia Minor. He presented his teachings to the presbyters at Rome, but they found it utterly unacceptable, which was not surprising considering his radical Gnostic views. He rejected the Old Testament entirely and regarded the God depicted there as an inferior Being. Jesus had come to liberate mankind from the authority of the God of the Old Testament and to reveal the superior God of goodness and mercy whom he called the Father. But this message had been obscured in the Gospel by Judaizing corruptions. Paul and Luke were the only ones to find favour with Marcion and these only partially. So what Marcion did was to set up a canon, a definite group of books which he regarded as fully authoritative, replacing all others. These comprised ten of the Pauline epistles (without the Pastorals) and Luke's Gospel. He seems to have edited these books, purging them of what did not accord with his views.

Marcion's views were dangerous and widespread. The Marcionites were the first to have a clearly defined canon. The compilation of this canon was a challenge and incentive to the church of Rome and the other like-minded churches. If these churches denied that Marcion's canon was the true one, then let them show what the true one really was. Before we examine the Church's response, we need to consider other heretical groups which may have contributed to this precipitating factor.

#### (b) Gnosticism

While the origins of Gnosticism are not certain, it is clear that the movement came to full bloom in the middle of the second century. With its idea of an



esoteric *gnosis* ('knowledge') it raised in more acute form the questions of tradition and authority that engaged the Apostolic Fathers. The Nag Hammadi finds of 1946 have provided us with fresh insights into their teachings. Chief among the finds was *The Gospel of Thomas* which is a collection of 114 sayings of Jesus and which has been proposed as a source for reliable traditions about the historical Jesus. Another significant Gnostic work was the apocryphal *Gospel of Truth* written in Rome ca. 140. The author used practically the same books as our present New Testament canon and the manner in which he treats these documents proves that they had authority for him. However, for the Gnostics true *gnosis* was beyond Scripture. Although they attributed their apocryphal writings to various apostles, they at times portray the apostles themselves as deficient in knowledge. While they did not delimit the canon as Marcion did, the Gnostics also performed a catalytic function in the formation of the canon. As David Dunbar concludes:

Gnosticism's effect on the Church was to intensify its concern for faithful adherence to the teaching of the apostles. The necessity for a concrete standard by which to evaluate the Church tradition pressed the orthodox Fathers from Irenaeus onward to focus more consciously on Scripture as the written fixation of the apostolic tradition.<sup>17</sup>

#### (c) Montanism

Later in the second century orthodoxy was to be challenged from yet another direction. Montanism was a movement that started ca. 156 in Phrygia in Asia Minor. Its leader, Montanus, believed that Christ's promise of the Holy Spirit (*Paraclete*) had now been fulfilled. Montanus was the Paraclete's mouthpiece. The coming of the Paraclete was the immediate prelude to the second advent of Christ and the establishment of the New Jerusalem in one of the towns of Phrygia. Montanism spread throughout the empire. By the end of the second century it had made one of its most illustrious converts in Tertullian of Carthage.

While Montanism stressed the renewal of the prophetic gift and taught that the Holy Spirit was manifesting himself supernaturally through entranced prophets and prophetesses (notably Montanus himself), the result of the Montanist challenge on the question of the canon has long been debated. The claim to inspiration by the Holy Spirit certainly challenged the Church's understanding of authority. However, such influence as the New Prophecy had on the emergent canon was certainly indirect. Montanist polemic comprised no attack upon the authority or validity of the Biblical writings (Old or New Testament). Nor were the Montanist oracles, collected in written form, seen as equivalent to Scripture.<sup>18</sup>

#### (d) The Church's Response

Nobody can doubt that Marcion, the Gnostics and Montanus forced reflection on the canon question. But what was the nature of the response it evoked in the Church? Opinion is sharply divided on this question. There are two basic points of view — the liberal and the conservative. The canon debate was epitomized in the work of two opposing German scholars. On the liberal side stood Adolf von Harnack. His staunchest opponent from the conservative camp was Theodor Zahn.

Adolf von Harnack (1851-1930) was the leading liberal theologian in Germany in the latter half of the nineteenth century and early twentieth century. In his view primitive Christianity was a religion of the Spirit, not of the letter. Oral tradition was supreme. Written documents had no official status. The heretics were the first to occupy themselves with the idea of a canon of authoritative writings. Marcion is the creator of the New Testament canon and is primarily responsible for the idea of the New Testament. In the light of this situation we are to understand the activity of the Church. In defending its position the Church felt compelled to create its own canon. The Church follows the lead of Marcion, but comes up with different results. Harnack thinks this was necessary, as oral tradition tends to become self-contradictory. As time passes there is a need to distinguish what is true from what is false in both oral and written tradition. In this the Christian Church goes counter to its genius. Christianity becomes a book religion and its essence is obscured. Its genius was recovered in nineteenth century liberal theology.<sup>19</sup> Harnack's view has been very influential and has long represented the liberal consensus. It met with strong opposition from conservative scholarship.

Theodor Zahn (1838-1933) was a staunchly conservative scholar in the Lutheran tradition and an implacable foe of theological liberalism. His major works were *Geschichte des Kanons* (1888-90) and *Einleitung in das Neue Testament* (1906). He did much valuable research in the area of patristics and was unrivalled in his field.

His approach is to begin with the first point which stands in a clear light,<sup>20</sup> namely the Church's interaction with those heretics who came with an alternative canon. He then works back as far as evidence will permit, i.e. to the origin or beginning of the canon forming process. Then he works in the other direction, namely the Church's reaction in response to the challenges presented by the heretics. This method leads him to conclude that from the beginning the Church had a New Testament in addition to the Jewish canon. The Church has shown an implicit awareness of this new collection of writings, and of the fact that this collection stands on a par with the Old Testament with respect to authority. The significance of heresies was that it forced the Church into a clearer understanding of what it had. The function of heresy is catalytic and not constitutive. It hastened a process. This explains why it is that during the period 170-220 we get a clear glimpse of what was held to be the canon for the first time. Zahn's position has in essence been the basic orthodox position ever since. For example, in 1986 David Dunbar could write:

The oral and written apostolic witness to Christ was that from which the primitive Church drew its life. The process by which the written form of that witness rose to increasing prominence and was gradually defined in the canonical understanding of the Church was both natural and spontaneous. The process was, to a great extent, underway before the Christian community was aware of its implications. From this perspective the sharp reaction of the Fathers to Marcion and the Gnostics is to be seen, not as a *de novo* selection of an alternative canon, but rather as a making explicit of what had always been implicit in the life of the Church.<sup>21</sup>

#### (e) Evidence of the Church's Response

Zahn began with points that stand in a clear light. We now need to consider some of the historical evidence which provides the underpinning for his position:

(i) The Muratorian Canon: This document gives a list of the canonical books with some comments. It was discovered in 1740 by the antiquarian L.A. Muratori. It is believed to have been written in Rome towards the end of the second century. It is the earliest extant document in which the canon is treated in a formal fashion. It states what documents are to be regarded as canonical and which are to be rejected.<sup>22</sup> It is unfortunately a fragment. The meaning is also obscure at points. It lists all the books of our New Testament except Hebrews, James and 2 Peter. There is also a question as to whether 1 Peter is mentioned. It includes one book, the *Apocalypse of Peter* (2 Peter?), which was subsequently rejected. The author of the Muratorian Canon himself has his hesitations about the book, for he notes that some do not accept it. The main value of the Muratorian Canon is that it indicates the books which were recognized as canonical in the Roman church towards the end of the second century. In this document we are already very close to our New Testament.<sup>23</sup>

(ii) Irenaeus (ca.130-200), whose writings are contemporary with the Muratorian list, presents the same picture. His evidence is significant in that he was a rather ecumenical figure in his day. He spent his earlier life in Asia Minor and his later life in Gaul. He was also in close touch with Rome. He does not seem to have had Hebrews in his canon, and there is some uncertainty as to whether he accepted the general epistles (except 1 Peter, 1 and 2 John). He refers to the *Shepherd of Hermas* as "scripture" but does not include it in the list of apostolic writings.



(iii) Tertullian (ca.160-220) is our authority for Africa. He appears to have had 22 books in his canon — the four Gospels, Acts, the thirteen epistles of Paul, 1 Peter, 1 John, Jude and Revelation. He did not treat Hebrews as canonical.

(iv) Origen (ca.185-254) in the East has a good deal to say about the canon. According to F.F. Bruce, "He acknowledged the four canonical Gospels, the Acts of the Apostles, the Pauline epistles and Hebrews, 1 Peter, 1 John and Revelation as 'undisputed' books." <sup>24</sup> Origen does acknowledge, however, that Hebrews, 2 Peter, 2 and 3 John, James and Jude were rejected by some.

#### (f) Summary

By the year 220 the status of the various writings of the New Testament are broadly as follows:

(i) The Gospels: They are one of the best attested sections of the New Testament during this period. In contrast to Marcion's one Gospel (Luke) and the Gnostics' *Gospel of Truth*, Irenaeus maintains that the Church recognizes four Gospels. There need to be four Gospels, he says, because there are four parts of the world and four winds (a rather quaint *a posteriori* argument!).

(ii) Acts: By this time it is acknowledged as the work of Luke. It has a secure position between the Gospels and the letters of Paul.

(iii) Paul: All thirteen letters are universally received and accepted. The unity of the Pauline material was recognized.

(iv) Hebrews: There is a sharp difference in the Church at this time concerning its canonicity. The Eastern Church which was strongly influenced by the Alexandrian theologians, Clement and Origen, readily accepted it as a letter of Paul. In the Western Church it was not accorded canonical status till late in the fourth century. This was because Pauline authorship of this epistle had at an early stage been denied in the West. Non-apostolic authorship was a dogmatic consideration.

(v) The Catholic Epistles have various positions of security at this time: James is an epistle over which there is again a sharp division of opinion. In the Eastern Church it is one of the books accepted without question, although in some circles as late as 325 it is regarded as a forgery. 1 Peter has a firm place in the canon. (Its omission from the Muratorian Canon was probably a scribal accident). The opposite is true for 2 Peter. Its history is very uncertain. Some believe the Muratorian Canon rejects 2 Peter. Others identify it with the Apocalypse of Peter (see above). There is no evidence of its canonicity before 350. It was rejected by the Syrian Church till the fifth century. It is difficult to determine the grounds for uncertainty. There is nothing of the modern trend to play off its theology against that of 1 Peter. 1 John was generally received. From a historical perspective 2 and 3 John have an uncertain position. Only by the fourth century are they received as canonical. It has been suggested that at this time all three letters were called "The Epistles of John." Because of their brevity, 2 and 3 John may have circulated with 1 John. The Muratorian Canon refers to two epistles of John. Jude is accepted in the Muratorian Canon and appealed to by Clement, Tertullian and Origen. However, it is not universally accepted. Around 360 it is not part of the canon in the Syrian and African Churches.

(vi) Revelation has quite a secure position at this time, although there is still some opposition. Irenaeus, Clement and Tertullian refer to it as "The Apocalypse" although the spurious *Apocalypse of Peter* was also circulating at the time. Of the latter the Muratorian Canon notes that "some of our people refuse to have it read in the Church."

(vii) Other Writings: Tertullian, Irenaeus and Clement cite the *Shepherd of Hermas* as Scripture. However, after 200 a series of ecclesiastical decisions began to loosen the bond between *The Shepherd* and other books. It is done rather mildly — it is to be read privately and for edification, but not to be read publicly with the prophets and the apostles. This attitude is already expressed in the Muratorian Canon which states: ".... it should be read, indeed, but it cannot be published to the people in Church either along with the prophets, whose number is complete, or with the apostles of these last days." <sup>25</sup> This seems to be an attempt to develop a deuterocanon. This attitude, however, seals the fate of *The Shepherd*.

The letters of Clement of Rome, especially 1 Clement (95 AD), were used in worship services, particularly in Corinth. However, 1 Clement never enjoyed widespread canonical recognition. The Apocalypse of Peter, the Didache, and the Acts of Paul (Latin) were other such documents. They were accepted for a time in limited circles, but eventually were excluded by all.

#### (g) Evaluation

By the end of the second century the canon was taking shape throughout Christendom. Twenty-three of the twenty-seven books are unquestionably part of the authoritative collection at this time. Hebrews, James, 2 Peter, Revelation, the Didache, the Shepherd of Hermas and 1 Clement have a doubtful position. The canonization process was hastened during the second century because of the catalytic activity of heretical groups.

Historically there are four factors which favour Zahn's position:

(i) The way in which the Fathers express themselves concerning the canon provides no evidence for Harnack's theory. It excludes the notion that around 150 the New Testament was established for the first time and that it was preceded by a canonless period.

(ii) We are not yet in the time of a state church. The local churches are still autonomous. The Church did not yet possess the instrumentation and structure to assure that all accepted the same canon and to suppress deviations in some other part of the Church. Harnack's point of view requires a church situation which did not yet exist.

(iii) Supposing the Church had such an implementation, the attempt to impose a canon would have run aground because of the respective peculiarities of regional churches. There is no evidence for a judicial battle over the canon at this time.

(iv) The strongest argument for Zahn is the state of the New Testament around 200. Basic agreement coupled with random disagreement characterizes this period. Difference of opinion rages over some books. The idea of fluid boundaries is unthinkable if (according to Harnack) the Church is creating a canon in response to Marcion. The Church's canon would then have been defined as exactly as Marcion's. Agreement and random disagreement point to an organic, spontaneous process of development uncoerced by any instrument of authority. <sup>26</sup> In short, the status of the canon between 170 and 220 indicates that the Church was conscious of a canon both now and earlier. The New Testament as an idea or a concrete phenomenon was not something thrust abruptly into the life of the Church between 150 and 170.

### 3. The Third and Fourth Centuries (220-400)

Between 170 and 220 the basic contours are closely drawn by the Church due to the catalytic effect of mid-second century heresies, especially Marcionism. Subsequent history is almost solely a matter of two mutually related processes: (a) fixing with ever greater exclusiveness and hardening of the limits of the canon, and (b) ever more widespread recognition of the canon increasing to the point of universal acceptance. A brief survey of this development will be in order:

#### (a) Eusebius (ca. 260-340)

With him we reach a very important landmark in the history of the canon. He provides us with a full statement in which he explains the position taken up in the Church at large. He makes an important distinction between *homologoumena* ('recognized books') and *antilegomena* ('disputed books') as follows:



i) The recognised books are the Gospels, Acts, the epistles of Paul (including Hebrews), 1 Peter, 1 John, and "perhaps Revelation" (if written by the apostle).

(ii) He divides the disputed books into two sub-classes: (1) those that ought to be included in the canon — James, Jude, 2 Peter, 2 and 3 John. (2) those that ought not to be included — the Acts of Paul, the Shepherd of Hermas, the Apocalypse of Peter, the Didache, Barnabas and "perhaps Revelation" (i.e. if not apostolic).<sup>27</sup> Apart from his hesitation on Revelation Eusebius' New Testament is identical to ours.

(b) Athanasius (296-373)

The first time we have a list of the New Testament books which coincides exactly with our New Testament (containing no more and no less) is in the thirty-ninth Festal Letter of Athanasius (367AD). He circulated it in the administration of his pastoral duties to advise his clergy of the date of Easter, etc. He makes a sharp distinction between "canonical writings" (the 27 books and these alone) and "those worthy of reading" (Old Testament Apocrypha<sup>28</sup>, The Shepherd and the Didache). Having listed the canonical books in his Festal Letter Athanasius then adds: "These are fountains of salvation, that they who thirst may be satisfied with the living words they contain. In these alone is proclaimed the doctrine of godliness. Let no man add to these, neither let him take ought from these."<sup>29</sup>

(c) Decisions of Councils

(i) The Greek Church: Athanasius' letter takes on judicial force and no conciliar decision is needed.

(ii) The Latin Church: The Synod at Rome in 382 recognized the 27 books and them alone as canonical. (Jerome's Vulgate which appeared shortly after this contained the 27 books).

(iii) The African Church: The synods at Hippo in 393 and Carthage in 397 ratify the synod at Rome.

(iv) The Syrian Church: The Peshitta version which includes 22 New Testament books omits 2 Peter, 2 and 3 John, Jude and Revelation. The native (as opposed to the Greek speaking) Syrian Church recognizes only the more limited canon of the Peshitta to the present day.<sup>30</sup>

(v) The Ethiopian Church acknowledges the canonical books of the larger Christian Church plus eight additional works dealing primarily with church order.

So although the consensus was not perfect, by the end of the fourth century the New Testament canon is officially fixed in the sense of being ecclesiastically defined and universally accepted. From this time on there was no real challenge to the canon until the time of the Enlightenment.

## B. Theological Reflection

Our treatment of the subject would hardly be complete without putting it into some theological perspective. Of course this has already been implicit in our tracing the historical development of the canon, but now we have come to the point where several theological perspectives need to be explicitly stated:

### 1. The Significance of History

The virtual unanimity with which the Church received the writings of the New Testament can be seen in the light of the special guidance and providence of God. The Reformed theologian, Louis Gaussen, in the nineteenth century saw this as evidence "that a concealed but almighty hand has been here interposed, and that the Head of the Church watches in silence over the new Oracles as he has watched over the old, preserving them from age to age against the folly of men."<sup>31</sup> This divine providence is apparent from the fact that the reception of the canon was a growing grass-roots consensus rather than a decision that was handed down by ecclesiastical authorities. The canon was not imposed by the apostles (Warfield),<sup>32</sup> but neither was it imposed by church leaders or by councils. Athanasius was no innovator. He simply set his seal on what the Church had been doing for a long time. Such councils as there were, were late and few. They stand at the end of the process rather than at the beginning. No action of a council or a synod was early enough to have had a decisive influence on the course of events. The historical evidence suggests that in the course of the three centuries following its completion the canon gradually commended itself to the Church. This is quite in accordance with Christ's promise of the Holy Spirit to his disciples. He is the Spirit of truth who will guide them into all the truth (John 16:13; cf. 14:26; 15:26).

### 2. The Role of the Church

The slowness with which the canon was formed has led some to the conclusion that "the Church gave us the Bible." In the contemporary discussion this position has been strongly argued by the conservative Catholic scholar, Nicolaus Appel.<sup>33</sup> He sees the canon as an ecclesiastical decision made in the postapostolic age. In this period the Church came to a deeper consciousness of a canon and to a true insight into the shape and boundaries of this canon. Only on the ground of an infallibly guided Church can there be a secure canon. The infallibility of the canon depends on the infallibility of the Church.

Leon Morris has given a concise answer to the question, "Did the Church originate the canon?":

The Church did not originate the Bible. Its inspiration is divine, not ecclesiastical. It stands or falls because of its relationship to God, not to the Church. Moreover, any official action of the Church is late. We do not find it before the last part of the fourth century. But by then the canon had to all its intents and purposes been decided.<sup>34</sup>

The wording of the conciliar decisions is also significant here. The decrees are never in the form: "This council decrees that henceforth such and such books are to be canonical." The Church never attempted to confer canonicity. The Church did not give authority to the canon, rather it recognized its authority. Hence the conciliar decrees have the form: "This council declares that these are the books which have always been held to be canonical." It would therefore be truer to say that the canon selected itself than that the Church selected it. Canonicity is something in the book itself, something that God has given to it, not a favoured status that the Church confers upon it.<sup>35</sup> Herman Ridderbos sums up the situation rather aptly:

It must be emphasized that the Church does not control the Canon, but the Canon controls the Church. For the same reason the Canon cannot be the product of the decision of the Church. The Church cannot 'make' or 'lay down' its own standard. All that the Church can lay down is this, that it has received the Canon as a standard and rule for faith and life, handed down to it with absolute authority.<sup>36</sup>

### 3. The Internal Testimony of the Holy Spirit<sup>37</sup>

Roman Catholic theologians have traditionally held that the authority of the canon was guaranteed by an infallible Church. The Reformers sensed here a threat to the *sola Scriptura* principle. For them the authority of Scripture was not dependent on the Church. Rather it was self-authenticating and sealed to the hearts of God's people by the witness of the Holy Spirit. (However, this witness was generally appealed to more to affirm the overall authority of the Bible than to validate the specific contents of the canon. For this, appeal was made to God's overriding providence). The Scripture is of divine origin, character and authority. It bears the marks of its divinity. It clearly evidences that it is of God, but man is unable to perceive this on his own and hence



needs the internal testimony of the Holy Spirit.<sup>38</sup> The Reformed and Roman Catholic positions are clearly contrasted in the Belgic Confession, Article 5 ("The Authority of Scripture"):

We receive all these books and these only as holy and canonical, for the regulating, founding, and establishing of our faith. And we believe without a doubt all things contained in them — not so much because the church receives and approves them as such but above all because the Holy Spirit testifies in our hearts that they are from God, and because they prove themselves to be from God.<sup>39</sup>

The internal witness of the Holy Spirit is not communication of additional information. It is not a divinely given proposition. It is simply one aspect of the organic action of the sanctifying activity of the Holy Spirit. It is always *cum verbo* ('with the Word'). It is an integral element of the process by which the mind of the sinner is enlightened and his will renewed (1 Cor.2:10-16; 1 Thess.2:4,13). John Murray refers to it as "supplementary attestation,"<sup>40</sup> i.e. in addition to the objective excellencies inherent in Scripture. The Word must be allowed to establish its own claim, i.e. independently of the Church.

#### 4. Criteria of Canonicity

An appreciation of the internal witness of the Holy Spirit will enable us to view the proposed criteria of canonicity in their proper perspective. While certain criteria may appear to solve the canon question they are all in the nature of the case *a posteriori*. The art will be to isolate "factor x" as the index mark of canonicity. While a number of plausible suggestions have been made throughout the history of the Church, no conclusive criteria have successfully been established.

Some examples:

(a) Apostolicity: This criterion was certainly operative in the life of the ancient Church. Its application in some circles clearly contributed to the tardy acceptance of Hebrews, James, Jude and Revelation. At times this criterion is modified to apostolic environment, if not exact authorship, such as in the case of Luke and Mark. But this weakens apostolicity as a criterion. Other writings, which were not included in the canon, could nevertheless have unequivocally claimed apostolic authorship (1 Cor.5:9 and Col.4:16). Apostolicity falls far short of being an all-embracing criterion for canonicity. Although he defines apostolicity very generously as "what was characteristic of the earliest church," H. Gamble is still careful not to overrate it as a criterion: "Widespread and important as this criterion was, it must still be said that no NT writing secured canonical standing on the basis of apostolicity alone."<sup>41</sup>

(b) Public Lection: Zahn believed that the important factor in canonical development was the use of the New Testament writings in the worship of the Church. It was the suitability of the writings for this purpose that gave them a place in the canon. But this criterion does not do justice to the facts.<sup>42</sup> The Shepherd of Hermas and the Didache were so used at an early point. On the other hand, there is little evidence to suggest that 2 Peter, 3 John and Jude were used for public lection in the early Church. As was the case with apostolicity, Gamble also expresses positive appreciation for this criterion, but again not without qualification: "This criterion was not definitive: many documents which met it quite adequately were not admitted into the canon ... while other writings lacking longstanding and broad currency nevertheless did gain canonical recognition, although tardily."<sup>43</sup>

(c) Christological Concentration: This was Luther's criterion of canonicity. He used the motto: "*Was Christum treibet und prediget*" ('what urges and preaches Christ'). In practice this approach resulted in "a canon within a canon." Luther relegated four books to a secondary position, putting Hebrews, James, Jude and Revelation at the end of his New Testament in a detached position. Hence this criterion tends to destroy the canon in any traditional sense of the term. It can vary to the extent that the person applying the principle thinks what "urges Christ." However, the churches of the Reformation (including the Lutherans) held more closely to the views of Calvin than those of Luther in these matters and the 27 books of the New Testament maintained their position. (Luther's influence is still detected in some Bible translations of the period, e.g. Tyndale's which places Hebrews and James with Jude and Revelation at the end of the New Testament collection).

(d) Evaluation: Further proposed criteria for canonicity could be discussed, such as antiquity, catholicity, inspiration and orthodoxy.<sup>44</sup> Historically, however, all attempts to establish such criteria have failed. More to the point is the observation that all attempts to establish criteria must in principle fail and in fact destroy the canonicity of the New Testament. This is true even in the case of apostolicity and Christocentricity. It is impossible to isolate "factor x."<sup>45</sup> It would mean subjecting the canon to fallible human insight and this destroys the absolute authority of the canon. To rationalize this phenomenon rests upon man's autonomy. An Archimedean point is then placed above the canon. A criterion would embrace the canon and hence undercut it. We are shut up to the canon as a self-establishing entity (cf. internal testimony). Canonicity is a unique concept. It coincides neither with what is apostolic nor with what appears to be "Christological." The canon is the highest authority and we cannot appeal to a higher authority to validate the canon.

Admittedly this approach is heavily presuppositional and *a priori*. The Scripture is self-authenticating. History shows that it commended itself to the Church. The historical development of the canon concept is quite in harmony with our presuppositions about the nature of its authority.

#### 5. Redemptive-Historical Considerations

The notion of redemptive history must be briefly considered at this point. Herman Ridderbos has made the astute observation that the authority of the canon is not to be sought in the history of the Church, but in the history of redemption:

In the New Testament the connection is inseparable between the main events of redemption and their announcement and transmission. The announcement of redemption is inseparable from the history of redemption itself.<sup>46</sup>

This is not to set up an extra-biblical criterion, for the entire spectrum of Scripture from creation to consummation must be seen as a redemptive-historical process. God provides a verbal commentary on his redemptive activity. The New Testament is the record, the testimony of God's redeeming activity. Hence the New Testament is itself a phenomenon in the history of redemption. It is a phenomenon in the history to which it bears witness. The basic principle, therefore, is the correlation of redemptive act and its revelatory attestation. God's deed and Word go together. God speaks, but his speech is related to his action. This correlation is also applicable to the history in its unfolding. High points in the history of redemption are also high points in the history of revelation. To quote Ridderbos again:

In conclusion we can only say that the deepest foundation of the canon can only lie in Christ himself, and in the nature of his coming and work. The very basis or ground for the recognition of the canon is, therefore, in principle redemptive-historical. ... For Christ is not only himself the canon in which God comes to the world, and in which he glorifies himself in contrast to the world, but Christ establishes the canon and gives it a concrete historical form.<sup>47</sup>

#### 6. Is the Canon Closed?

One of the implications of the redemptive-historical perspective is the closed canon. Christ and the apostolic tradition constitute the eschatological fullness of divine revelation. The canon is therefore limited to those documents that the Church experienced as foundational to its own existence. A sensitivity to the flow of redemptive history shows the correlation between redemptive activity and revelation, and negatively between inactivity and silence. For example, the rebuilding of the temple is the last event in redemptive history prior to Christ. Following this there is a low in the history of redemption for 400 years. With respect to revelation this is a period of silence. A new redemptive event then occurs. In Christ both revelation and redemption come to their climax and conclusion. Only the return of Christ is outstanding now (1 Thess. 1:10). The redemption in Christ is authoritatively recorded (Gospels) and interpreted



(Epistles). Thus the history of revelation for us is closed. This is connected to the apostolic institution (cf. John 14-16). It provided infallible revelatory attestation for Christ and his work.

## Conclusion

Ridderbos has aptly illustrated the nature of the canonical process in the history of the ancient Church:

The Church has dealt with this situation as does one who knows and points to a certain person as father or mother. Such a knowledge rests not on demonstration but upon direct experience; it is most closely connected with one's own identity. In this and no other way must we picture the knowledge and 'decision' of the Church concerning the Canon.<sup>48</sup>

In this way the history of the canon *a posteriori* supports the redemptive-historical *a priori*. Yet it remains a confession of faith that the canon of the New Testament corresponds exactly to Christ's canon. Their identity cannot be absolutely established by historical study. Historical evidence and "proofs" take us only so far. As in so many other areas there comes a point where it becomes a matter of faith. Our theological presuppositions and the historical evidence dovetail, but not perfectly. While our view of the canon does greater justice to the historical process than do, for example, the views of Harnack and the Roman Catholic theologians, we do not claim any infallible criteria of canonicity. In the end, with Ridderbos, we must acknowledge in faith that the empirical canon coincides with the canon of Christ. We can be absolutely certain and not just "practically" certain about the status of the canon,<sup>49</sup> but our certainty does not depend upon our study of historical data, but it comes from our faith in the sovereignty and providence of God.

## Notes

1. W.F. Arndt & F.W. Gingrich, *A Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament and Other Early Christian Literature*, second edition, Chicago and London: The University of Chicago Press, 1979, 403.
2. C.T. Lewis & C. Short, *A Latin Dictionary*, Oxford: Clarendon, 1962, 280.
3. e.g. Belgic Confession, Article 5, and Westminster Confession of Faith (I:3).
4. A discussion of the recent debate from an Evangelical viewpoint is offered by D.G. Dunbar, "The Biblical Canon," *Hermeneutics, Authority and Canon*, edited by D.A. Carson and J.D. Woodbridge, Zondervan: Grand Rapids, 1986, 303-15. In the closing paragraphs of his discussion Dunbar concludes: "Placing a *terminus ad quem* on the completion of the Old Testament canon is difficult, partly due to an almost total lack of evidence. Ancient Jewish and Christian tradition connect the closing of the canon with the ministry of Ezra. But if the idea of the canon is a historical one that included the belief that the line of the ancient prophets had ceased, then a date subsequent to Ezra is more likely. ... What can be said with confidence is that at least a century before the Christian era, the Jews were conscious that prophecy in its classical form belonged to the past."
5. Its earliest attestation in this sense is in the writings of Athanasius, followed soon afterwards by the use of the Latin word *canon* by Jerome and Augustine in the same way.
6. H.Ridderbos, "The Canon of the New Testament," in C.F.Henry (ed.), *Revelation and the Bible: Contemporary Evangelical Thought*, Grand Rapids: Baker, 1958, 198.
7. This "canon awareness" on the part of the early Church is axiomatic for the discipline developed in recent years by B.S. Childs known as canon criticism. This is an approach to the books of the Bible which does not treat them as individual documents but rather as components of the completed corpus of Scripture. Childs explains the origin of the New Testament canon along the following lines: "Canon consciousness thus arose at the inception of the Christian church and lies deep within the New Testament literature itself. There is an organic continuity in the historical process of the development of an established canon of sacred writings from the earliest stages of the New Testament to the final canonical stabilization of its scope. That the continuity was hammered out in continuous conflict is also true." (B.S. Childs, *The New Testament as Canon: An Introduction*, Philadelphia: Fortress, 1984, 21).
8. As Childs observes, "the process of the formation of authoritative religious writings long preceded the the particular designation of the collection as canon in the fourth century," *The New Testament as Canon*, 25.
9. For this and the following categories a more detailed discussion can be found in H. Ridderbos, *Redemptive History and the New Testament Scriptures*, translated by H. De Jongste and revised by R.B. Gaffin, Grand Rapids: Baker, 1988, 12-24.
10. This concept is represented in the NT by the noun *paradosis* and its cognate verb *paradidomi*.
11. Ridderbos, *The Authority of the New Testament Scriptures*, Grand Rapids: Baker, 1963, 18.
12. B.B. Warfield, "The Formation of the Canon of the New Testament," *The Inspiration and Authority of the Bible*, edited by S.G. Craig, London: Marshall, Morgan & Scott, 1959, 415.
13. *Inspiration and Authority*, 416.
14. 1 Clement 42:1,2, *The Apostolic Fathers: Greek Texts and English Translations of Their Writings*, second edition, edited and translated by J.B. Lightfoot and J.R. Harmer, edited and revised by M.W. Holmes, Grand Rapids: Baker, 1992, 75.
15. *The Spreading Flame*, Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1958, 226.
16. F.F. Bruce, "Canon," *Dictionary of Jesus and the Gospels*, edited by J.B. Green and S. McKnight, Downers Grove/Leicester: Inter Varsity Press, 1992, 95.
17. "The Biblical Canon," 331.
18. Dunbar, 338.
19. Harnack's discussion of the canon question appeared in English translation under the title, *The Origin of the New Testament*, London: Williams & Norgate, 1925.
20. Zahn explains his methodology as follows: "Da uns keine Nachrichten über die Entstehung des NT's zu Gebote stehen, so sind wir darauf angewiesen, von einem in hellerem Licht stehenden Punkt der Entwicklung aus rückwärts schreitend, unter sorgfältiger Berücksichtigung der einschlagenden Tatsachen, welche uns auf diesem Wege aufstoßen, dem Ursprung näher zu kommen." (Th. Zahn, *Grundriss der Geschichte des Neutestamentlichen Kanons: Eine Ergänzung zu der Einleitung in das Neue Testament*, second edition, Leipzig: A. Deichert, 1904, 14). Immediately following this explanation Zahn turns his attention to a discussion of Marcion, the Gnostics and Montanism. It was in contradistinction to these three movements that the early Church began to define its collection of authoritative writings with ever greater clarity. Ironically it was the heretics who provided Zahn with some of the most substantial evidence for his position. It was because of their activity that the Church developed a clearer awareness of what it already had.
21. Dunbar, 357.
22. For a translation of the manuscript see F.F.Bruce, *The Spreading Flame*, 232-4.
23. Although an early date for the Muratorian fragment has been the traditional view and has been upheld in recent times by both F.F. Bruce and B.M. Metzger, it has not been without its critics. A.G. Patzia has therefore sounded a note of caution: "The enthusiasm for the value of the Fragment has been challenged in recent scholarship. A.C. Sundberg's analysis led him to propose a fourth-century date and an Eastern setting ... Among Sundberg's objections to an early date for the Fragment are its attitude toward the Shepherd of Hermas and the fact that there are no similar lists until the time of Eusebius in the fourth century." (A.G. Patzia, "Canon," *Dictionary of Paul and his Letters*, edited by G.F. Hawthorne and R.P. Martin, Downers Grove/Leicester: InterVarsity Press, 1993, 90).
24. "Canon," 98.
25. See Bruce, *Spreading Flame*, 234.
26. Zahn, *Grundriss*, 27.
27. Eusebius, "Church History," *A Select Library of Nicene and Post-Nicene Fathers of the Christian Church*, second series, volume 1, edited by P. Schaff and H. Wace, Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1952, 133-35.



28. The Old Testament Apocrypha were never accepted as part of the Jewish canon. They were appended to copies of the LXX rather ignorantly by the early Christians. Hence they began to circulate as Scripture in the Church. Jerome apparently challenged Augustine on this, but without success. The practice was again tackled at the time of the Reformation. (Dunbar, 310).
29. Athanasius, "From Letter XXXIX," *A Select Library of Nicene and Post-Nicene Fathers of the Christian Church*, second series, volume 4, edited by P. Schaff and H. Wace, Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1957, 552.
30. Dunbar, 317.
31. Quoted by Dunbar, 344.
32. See above.
33. N. Appel, *Kanon und Kirche. Die Kanonkrise im heutigen Protestantismus als kontrovers-theologisches Problem*, Paderborn: Bonafacius-Druckerei, 1964.
34. L. Morris, "Canon of the New Testament," in *The Encyclopedia of Christianity*, volume 2, edited by G.G. Cohen, Marshallton, Delaware: The National Foundation for Christian Education, 1968, 337.
35. cf. Morris, 338.
36. "Canon of the New Testament," 196.
37. For a detailed discussion of this subject see John Murray, "The Attestation of Scripture," *The Infallible Word*, edited by Paul Woolley, Philadelphia: Presbyterian and Reformed, 1967, 46-54.
38. As Calvin said, "For as God alone is a fit witness of himself in his Word, so also the Word will not find acceptance in men's hearts before it is sealed by the inward testimony of the Spirit," *Institutes of the Christian Religion*, volume 1, edited by J.T. McNeill and translated by F.L. Battles, Philadelphia: The Westminster Press, 1960, 79. Although in the context of this statement Calvin is not addressing the canon question per se, his argument has direct bearing on the issue of canonicity. Book 1, chapter 7, from which this quote is taken, bears the title: "Scripture must be confirmed by the witness of the Spirit. Thus may its authority be established as certain; and it is a wicked falsehood that its credibility depends on the judgment of the church." Throughout this chapter Calvin strongly argues the point that the canon derives its authority not from the Church but from God. Scripture does not need to be authenticated by the Church nor by any human authority because it is self-authenticating. As Calvin says in section 4 of this chapter: "If we desire to provide in the best way for our consciences ... we ought to seek our conviction in a higher place than human reasons, judgments or conjectures, that is, in the secret testimony of the Spirit."
39. "The Belgic Confession," *The Book of Forms - Reformed Churches of Australia*, Geelong: Reformed Churches Publishing House, 1991, 21.
40. "The Attestation of Scripture," 42ff.
41. H. Gamble, *The New Testament Canon: Its Making and Meaning*, Philadelphia: Fortress, 1985, 68.
42. E.F. Harrison makes a fair evaluation of Zahn's argument at this point: "Zahn's view has a measure of truth, surely, but it would be hard to substantiate in the case of all the books of the New Testament, some of which are obviously less suited than others for ecclesiastical use because of their brevity and in some cases their rather private character," *Introduction to the New Testament*, Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1964, 116.
43. Gamble, *The New Testament Canon*, 71.
44. See Gamble, 67-72.
45. John Calvin claims as much in a slightly different context, in his discussion of the Scripture's own authentication: "We seek no proofs, no marks of genuineness upon which our judgment may lean; but we subject our judgment and wit to it as to a thing far beyond any guesswork!" (*Institutes*, volume 1, 80).
46. H. Ridderbos, *The Authority of the New Testament Scriptures*, Grand Rapids: Baker, 1963, 16.
47. *Authority*, 40.
48. "Canon of the New Testament," 200.
49. This is the final conclusion reached by Dunbar in his article, "The Biblical Canon," 360. It is the inevitable result of his consistently evidentialist approach, which he shares with apologist John Warwick Montgomery. Although he has a high view of Scripture, his confidence in the contours of the canon falls short of absolute certainty. His examination of the historical evidence can ultimately lead him no further than the conviction that "there is great assurance to be drawn from the widespread judgment of the early Christians that this group of writings comprises the authoritative teachings of the apostles."

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# The New Testament Canon

By Glenn W. Barker

Chapter 2 from *The New Testament Speaks*, by Glenn W. Barker, William L. Lane, and J. Ramsey Michaels (New York: Harper & Row, 1969).

The New Testament canon is the New Testament thought of as a rule of faith which possesses divine authority over the church. As canonical writings the twenty-seven books constitute the definitive witness to Jesus Christ as Lord, and are regarded by Christians as the infallible rule of Christian faith and life, the inspired deposit of God's revelation. Two questions in particular may be raised concerning the canon of the New Testament: 1. Historically, how early may we trace the origin of the canon? 2. Theologically, what does the collection and recognition of the authoritative character of the several books mean?

## 1. The Origin and Development of the Canon

In the one-hundred-year period extending roughly from A.D. 50 to 150 a number of documents began to circulate among the churches. These included epistles, gospels, acts, apocalypses, homilies, and collections of teachings. While some of these documents were apostolic in origin, others drew upon the tradition the apostles and ministers of the word had utilized in their individual missions. Still others represented a summation of the teaching entrusted to a particular church center. Several of these writings sought to extend, interpret, and apply apostolic teaching to meet the needs of Christians in a given locality.

From the beginning it was expected that certain of these documents would be read in the public gatherings of the church. The final instruction in Paul's earliest epistle is a solemn admonition to see that "this letter be read to all the brethren" (1 Thess. 5:27), while to the Colossians he wrote, "when this letter has been read among you, have it read also in the church of the Laodiceans" (Col. 4:16). The opening verses of the Book of Revelation envisions the churches gathered in worship: "Blessed is he who reads aloud the words of the prophecy, and blessed are those who hear, and who keep what is written therein" (Rev. 1:3). Frequently a document demanded its wide circulation, as in the case of Galatians ("to the churches of Galatia") or Second Corinthians ("to the church of God which is at Corinth, with all the saints who are in the whole of Achaia"). The churches increasingly found it profitable to share their literary holdings with one another, with the result that copies of the earliest writings began to circulate among the several centers of Christendom.

As the amount of material circulating increased, it was inevitable that similar materials should be collected together in order to protect against loss as well as to make them more available for study and use within the churches. There appears to be some evidence that the first formal collection consisted of ten of Paul's letters which were bound together and published as a single corpus sometime prior to A.D. 100. <sup>(1)</sup>

Not longer after, the Gospels were also collected and published as a single corpus. <sup>(2)</sup> The consequence of this action was to prove an even greater benefit to the church than had the publication of the Pauline corpus. Prior to this event, each of the Gospels had been identified with a particular geographical region: Mark with Rome, Matthew with Antioch and Syria, John with Ephesus and Asia, and Luke with Paul's churches in Greece. The differences among them were freely acknowledged, but only when the Gospels began to circulate beyond their own immediate environment were these differences accentuated. <sup>(3)</sup> This invited not only comparison but even choice among them, as some groups preferred one Gospel and some another. The collection of the four Gospels into a single corpus, and its publication as the fourfold *Gospel* of the church, preserved all four documents for the life and edification of each church. No longer required to compete for their existence, the Gospels were now allowed to complement each other. <sup>(4)</sup>

These two collections of material served as the solid core for a new body of literature which began to take its place alongside the Old Testament Scriptures. Very early the Book of Acts, First Peter, First John, and Revelation were added to this core. In individual regions additional writings were also included, not all of which finally achieved canonical status. Such documents as Clement's letter to Corinth continued to be read in that church until the fifth century; <sup>(5)</sup> there was extensive use of the *Didache* in Syria, of the *Epistle of Barnabas* in Alexandria, of the *Shepherd of Hermas* in Carthage, and of the *Apocalypse of Peter* in Rome. None of these documents, however, succeeded in establishing its authority over the larger church. They were seen to be examples of edifying literature which had proven useful for a time but which lacked the permanent validity of the apostolic writings.

It was probably the rise of heretics—especially Marcion, who adopted as his canon a truncated form of Luke and Paul's ten letters to churches—which forced the church to declare itself regarding the relative authority of the documents currently read in the churches. This new body of Christian literature only gradually imposed its authority on the church. In spite of the practice of publicly reading from the newer documents in services of worship, there is no clear, early evidence that they were considered to be equal in authority to the scriptures of the Old Covenant. If the term "Scripture" could be applied to Paul's letters (2 Peter 3:16) or later to the Gospels (II Clement, Justin), not until the end of the second century were the expressions "inspired writings," "Scriptures of the Lord," and "the Scriptures" used indiscriminately of both the Old Testament and the core of the New. At this time the designation "the New Testament" made its appearance and ultimately displaced all earlier names for the collection of the new books. Henceforth it was no longer a question of the nature of the canon, but only of its extent.

By A.D. 200, twenty-one of the books of the New Testament had a secure position in the canon. In the course of discussion it was possible to group a book according to one of three categories: (1) the *homologoumena* or universally accepted writings; (2) the *antilegomena* or disputed books, accepted by some churches but challenged by others; and (3) the *notha* or clearly spurious documents. During the third century, James, Jude, Second and Third John, Second Peter, and Hebrews were frankly disputed in different sectors of the church, so that Origen and Eusebius classified them among the *antilegomena*. <sup>(6)</sup> Revelation had enjoyed wide acceptance at the beginning of the century, but in the ensuing years it was subjected to challenge and discrimination. The dispute over questions of authorship, authenticity, style, and doctrine subsided by the middle of the fourth century, and these documents also took their place in the lists of books accepted by the bishops of the church. The church fathers Jerome and Augustine acknowledged the entire twenty-seven books of the canon, as did the councils of Hippo in 393 and Carthage in 397. By the end of the fourth century the limits of the New Testament canon were irrevocably settled in both the Greek and Latin churches. Only in the churches of Syria and elsewhere in the East did the question continue to be debated. Even here all of the books accepted elsewhere in the church finally achieved recognition.

The fact that substantially the whole church came to recognize the same twenty-seven books as canonical is remarkable when it is remembered that the result was not contrived. All that the several churches throughout the empire could do was to witness to their own experience with the documents and share whatever knowledge they might have about their origin and character. When consideration is given to the diversity in cultural backgrounds and in orientation to the essentials of the Christian faith within the churches, their common agreement about which books belonged to the New Testament serves to suggest that this final decision did not originate solely at the human level.

No less remarkable is the way in which this fourth-century conclusion continued to be vindicated and maintained throughout the history of the church. The canon of twenty-seven books endured the schisms of the fifth century, the division of the church into East and West in the ninth century, and the violent rupture occasioned by the Reformation in the sixteenth century. When diverse elements within the church found it impossible to find or maintain agreement on any other subject, they continued to honor the same canon.

The significance of this fact to the important dialogues which are taking place in our own generation can scarcely be overestimated. F.W. Beare has aptly



said:

In our own time, hopes of reunion could hardly be entertained, and the ecumenical movement would be all but inconceivable, were it not that all the churches are in substantial agreement in recognizing the unique authority of the same twenty-seven books as constituting the canon of the New Testament, in employing them constantly in public and private devotions, and in appealing to them for guidance in faith and order. <sup>(7)</sup>

## 2. The Meaning of the Canon

The question regarding the meaning of the canon is far more complex than questions of origin and development. It focuses primarily on the process by which the several books were collected and recognized as authoritative and inquires concerning the relative validity of that process. Ultimately it seeks to know the "truth" of the canon. Is the existence of a New Testament canon the intention of sacred history or a fortuitous accident within it?

Although ultimate answers concerning the "truth" of the canon cannot be found from its history, several factors can be examined which help create confidence in that history. First among these is the character of Scripture itself. The concept of "sacred Scripture" did not originate in the early church, but was already an essential part of the Jewish heritage. Moreover, the attitude which the Christians developed towards Scripture was drawn directly from Jesus, who confirmed to his disciples its character as the divine truth. He established the divine authority of Scripture by identifying the Old Testament with the word of his Father. He further demonstrated the divine nature of Scripture insofar as the effect of his coming was to realize its fulfillment. Jesus entered history as the Messiah promised according to the revelation the Father had given to Israel through Moses and the prophets. The implication which this had for the Christians was twofold: (1) It established the place and the function of the Old Testament in the life of the church; (2) It prepared the way for a new word of Scripture. If it was proper and necessary that God's word revealed to Moses and the prophets should be preserved and recorded, how much more important was it that the word given through the Son and proclaimed by the apostles should be preserved by the same process?

A second factor which has direct bearing on the meaning of a New Testament canon concerns the function of the church with regard to sacred documents. The church did not act to "commission," or "authorize," the writing of any materials. Holy Scripture remained the prerogative of God. The precedent was already established in Israel's history. The nation was never authorized to create its own prophets; prophecy owed its origin not to human desire but to the impulse of the Holy Spirit of God (cf. 2 Peter 1:19-21). Similarly, God by his Spirit raised up unknown prophets and teachers to accomplish his will in the church. Among those whom God selected as writers of the New Testament documents no more than three were immediate disciples of Jesus. The initiative to call men to this task remained God's; the function of the church was to receive what God had given to the community of faith. He selected the time, the circumstances, and the human instrument through whom the divine word of revelation should find written expression.

A third factor concerned the criteria which the churches apparently employed in recognizing the inspired character of the New Testament writings. While caution is necessary due to an insufficiency of evidence, it seems that subject matter, authorship, and evidence of continued use within the churches all contributed to the ultimate recognition of a document. In subject matter, was that which was written a genuine witness to Christ and from Christ? Did it conform to the words of Jesus and the apostolic tradition preserved within the church by prophets and teachers? Any document purporting to have been written by an apostle or by one who had labored closely with an apostle had a presumption in its favor that it was true to the received tradition. But the mere presence of a claim to trusted authorship was not sufficient to win enduring approval for a writing. The existence of the tradition in oral form provided the basis for testing such claims and resulted in the discrimination between authentic and spurious documents. The church was confident that if a document were genuinely inspired it would conform to the truth which God had revealed through tested witnesses. Finally, documents which imposed their authority upon the churches and continued to reflect use by the Spirit of God were acknowledged to be inspired. Thus writings such as Hebrews and James proved their worth in the daily life of the church and were recognized as canonical even though they could not with certainty be identified with apostolic authorship.

When one therefore examines the criteria used by the church and sees the care with which they were applied and the time allotted for decision, the confidence which he has in the results is strengthened. Ultimately, of course, one's confidence rests not in the process but in him who gives the Scripture to his church. For whatever weakness might be involved in the procedures of man, it is not such that it can set aside the firm intention of God.

### Pertinent Data on the New Testament Books

Due to the nature of the New Testament material, the matter of authorship, date, and place of origin is necessarily tentative and conjectural. Books which treat this material in a more extensive form include Feine-Behm-Kümmel, *And Introduction to the New Testament* (Protestant Liberal); D. Guthrie, *New Testament Introduction*, 3 vols. (Protestant Conservative); and A. Wikenhauser, *New Testament Introduction* (Roman Catholic). Our suggestions are as follows:

	Authorship	Date	Place of Origin
Matthew	Apostle Matthew	75-85	Antioch
Mark	John Mark	67-72	Rome
Luke	Luke	75-90	Greece?
John	Apostle John	90-100	Asia Minor
Acts	Luke	75-90	Greece?
Romans	Apostle Paul	55-56	Corinth
1 Corinthians	Paul	54-55	Ephesus
2 Corinthians	Paul	55	Macedonia
Galatians	Paul	55	Ephesus?
Ephesians	Paul	60-62	Rome
Philippians	Paul	60-62	Rome
Colossians	Paul	60-62	Rome
1 Thessalonians	Paul	50-51	Corinth
2 Thessalonians	Paul	50-51	Corinth
1 Timothy	Paul	62-64	Macedonia
2 Timothy	Paul	64-68	Rome
Titus	Paul	62-64	Macedonia
Philemon	Paul	60-62	Rome
Hebrews	Anonymous	62-66	Asia Minor?
James	James, the brother of Jesus	50-60?	Unknown
1 Peter	Apostle Peter	63-64	Rome
2 Peter	[Apostle Peter]	80-90?	Unknown
1 John	Apostle John	90-100	Asia Minor



2 John	Apostle John	90-100	Asia Minor
3 John	Apostle John	90-100	Asia Minor
Jude	Jude, the brother of Jesus	70-90?	Unknown
Revelation	Apostle John	96	Asia Minor

## Notes

1. Cf. G. Zuntz, *The Text of the Epistles: A Disquisition upon the Corpus Paulinum* (1953), pp. 14-17, 276-83. Zuntz argues on the basis of textual features that the ten Pauline letters to the churches existed as an entity known and used by Ignatius and Polycarp, demonstrating the existence of the Pauline corpus by A.D. 100. The fact that *1 Clement*, written A.D. 96, refers to Romans and First Corinthians but not to the other epistles suggests that the corpus may have come into existence around the turn of the century.
2. E.J. Goodspeed dates this collection A.D. 115-125 (see *An Introduction to the New Testament* [1937], p. 314). Floyd V. Filson, *A New Testament History* (1964), p. 391, suggests A.D. 125.
3. Cf. the language of the *Muratorian Fragment* (late second century): "And therefore, though various beginnings are taught in the several books of the Gospels, it makes no difference to the faith of believers, since by one guiding Spirit all things are declared in all of them." For the complete text, see D.J. Theron, *Evidence of Tradition* (1958), pp. 107-13.
4. See Oscar Cullmann, "The Plurality of the Gospels as a Theological Problem in Antiquity," in *The Early Church* (1956), pp. 39-54.
5. Cf. the letter of Dionysius of Corinth (circa 167-170) to the Romans under their bishop, Soter: "Today we observed the holy day of the Lord, and read out your letter, which we shall continue to read from time to time for our admonition, as we do with that which was formerly sent to us through Clement" (Eusebius, *Hist. Eccl.* IV, xxiii, 11).
6. Eusebius, *Hist. Eccl.* III, xxv, 1-4: VI, xxv, 3 ff.
7. "Canon of the New Testament," *Interpreter's Dictionary of the Bible*, Vol. 1 (1962), p. 520.

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## The New Testament Canon

### New Testament Books Treated as Traditional Scripture by Early Writers

*Italic type* indicates that the writer either does not mention the book or expressed some doubt about the status of the book.

Athanasius (b. 296)	Origen (b. 185)	Irenaeus (b. 130)	Marcion*
Matthew	Matthew	Matthew	
Mark	Mark	Mark	
Luke	Luke	Luke	Luke
John	John	John	
Acts	Acts	Acts	
Romans	Romans	Romans	Romans
1 Corinthians	1 Corinthians	1 Corinthians	1 Corinthians
2 Corinthians	2 Corinthians	2 Corinthians	2 Corinthians
Galatians	Galatians	Galatians	Galatians
Ephesians	Ephesians	Ephesians	Ephesians
Philippians	Philippians	Philippians	Philippians
Colossians	Colossians	Colossians	Colossians
1 Thessalonians	1 Thessalonians	1 Thessalonians	1 Thessalonians
2 Thessalonians	2 Thessalonians	2 Thessalonians	2 Thessalonians
1 Timothy	1 Timothy	1 Timothy	
2 Timothy	2 Timothy	2 Timothy	
Titus	Titus	Titus	
Philemon	Philemon	Philemon	Philemon
Hebrews	Hebrews	<i>Hebrews</i>	
James	<i>James</i>	<i>James</i>	
1 Peter	1 Peter	1 Peter	
2 Peter	<i>2 Peter</i>	<i>2 Peter</i>	
1 John	1 John	1 John	
2 John	<i>2 John</i>	<i>2 John</i>	
3 John	<i>3 John</i>	<i>3 John</i>	
Jude	<i>Jude</i>	<i>Jude</i>	
Revelation**	Revelation	Revelation	

\* Marcion's views were peculiar to his sect. He was aware of the fact that many of the other books were read as scripture in most churches.

\*\* The Revelation of John was first received and then rejected by many churches in Asia Minor.



## The Old Testament Canon and Apocrypha

The following table gives the names of books included in the Old Testament of the [Hebrew Bible](#), the [Greek Septuagint](#), the [Latin Vulgate](#), and the [King James Version](#) (1611). Names of apocryphal books are italicized. The books enclosed in square brackets in the Septuagint column are books which appear in only some copies of that version.

[Summaries](#) of the apocryphal books are given below.

Hebrew Bible	Greek Septuagint	Latin Vulgate	King James Version
THE LAW Genesis Exodus Leviticus Numbers Deuteronomy  THE PROPHETS Joshua Judges 1 Samuel 2 Samuel 1 Kings 2 Kings Isaiah Jeremiah Ezekiel Hosea Joel Amos Obadiah Jonah Micah Nahum Habakkuk Zephaniah Haggai Zechariah Malachi  THE WRITINGS Psalms Proverbs Job Song of Songs Ruth Lamentations Ecclesiastes Esther Daniel Ezra Nehemiah 1 Chronicles 2 Chronicles	Genesis Exodus Leviticus Numbers Deuteronomy Joshua Judges Ruth 1 Samuel 2 Samuel 1 Kings 2 Kings 1 Chronicles 2 Chronicles [Prayer of Manasseh] 1 Esdras  Ezra Nehemiah Tobit Judith Esther (with <i>insertions</i> )* 1 Maccabees 2 Maccabees [3 Maccabees] [4 Maccabees] Job Psalms [Psalm no. 151] [Odes] Proverbs Ecclesiastes Song of Songs Wisdom of Solomon Ecclesiasticus [Psalms of Solomon] Isaiah Jeremiah Lamentations Baruch Epistle of Jeremiah Ezekiel Daniel (with <i>insertions</i> )** Hosea Joel Amos Obadiah Jonah Micah Nahum Habakkuk Zephaniah Haggai Zechariah Malachi	Genesis Exodus Leviticus Numbers Deuteronomy Joshua Judges Ruth 1 Samuel 2 Samuel 1 Kings 2 Kings 1 Chronicles 2 Chronicles Prayer of Manasseh 1 Esdras 2 Esdras Ezra Nehemiah Tobit Judith Esther (with <i>insertions</i> )* 1 Maccabees 2 Maccabees  Job Psalms  Proverbs Ecclesiastes Song of Songs Wisdom of Solomon Ecclesiasticus  Isaiah Jeremiah Lamentations Baruch Epistle of Jeremiah Ezekiel Daniel (with <i>insertions</i> )** Hosea Joel Amos Obadiah Jonah Micah Nahum Habakkuk Zephaniah Haggai Zechariah Malachi	Genesis Exodus Leviticus Numbers Deuteronomy Joshua Judges Ruth 1 Samuel 2 Samuel 1 Kings 2 Kings 1 Chronicles 2 Chronicles Ezra Nehemiah Esther (Hebrew)* Job Psalms Proverbs Ecclesiastes Song of Songs Isaiah Jeremiah Lamentations Ezekiel Daniel (Hebrew)** Hosea Joel Amos Obadiah Jonah Micah Nahum Habakkuk Zephaniah Haggai Zechariah Malachi  APOCRYPHA 1 Esdras 2 Esdras Tobit Judith Additions to Esther* Wisdom of Solomon Ecclesiasticus Baruch Epistle of Jeremiah Song of the Three Children** Story of Susanna** Bel and the Dragon** Prayer of Manasseh 1 Maccabees 2 Maccabees
*Esther in the Septuagint has six extra paragraphs inserted at various places. In the Vulgate these are all removed to the end of the book. English versions omit them entirely, or remove them to an Apocrypha section.			
**Daniel in the Septuagint has <i>The Story of Susanna</i> inserted at the beginning, the <i>Song of the Three Children</i> inserted in chapter 3, and the story of <i>Bel and the Dragon</i> added to the end. In the Vulgate <i>Susanna</i> is moved to before <i>Bel</i> . English versions omit them entirely, or remove them to an Apocrypha section.			

The extra books which were eventually received as Scripture in the Greek Orthodox church and those received in the Roman Catholic church do not correspond exactly to the list of books commonly called "Apocrypha" by Protestants. The Protestant Apocrypha includes all of the books normally included in manuscripts of the Latin Vulgate. But three of these (1 and 2 Esdras and the Prayer of Manasseh) were omitted from the list published by the [Council of Trent](#) when it fixed the Roman Catholic canon. (Apparently these omissions were unintentional. The "Decree Concerning the Canonical Scriptures" specified that the books were to be received "as they are contained in the old Latin Vulgate.") The Eastern Orthodox churches (including the Greek, the Russian, the Ukrainian, the Bulgarian, the Serbian, the Armenian, and others) do not receive 2 Esdras because it was not in the Septuagint, and they receive some books which were present in many manuscripts of the Septuagint but not in the Vulgate (Psalms 151, 3 and 4 Maccabees).

Greek Orthodox Canon	Protestant Apocrypha	Roman Catholic Canon
1 Esdras  Tobit Judith Additions to Esther	1 Esdras 2 Esdras Tobit Judith Additions to Esther	Tobit Judith Additions to Esther



Wisdom of Solomon Ecclesiasticus Baruch Epistle of Jeremiah Song of the Three Children Story of Susanna Bel and the Dragon Prayer of Manasseh 1 Maccabees 2 Maccabees 3 Maccabees 4 Maccabees Psalm 151	Wisdom of Solomon Ecclesiasticus Baruch Epistle of Jeremiah Song of the Three Children Story of Susanna Bel and the Dragon Prayer of Manasseh 1 Maccabees 2 Maccabees	Wisdom of Solomon Ecclesiasticus Baruch Epistle of Jeremiah Song of the Three Children Story of Susanna Bel and the Dragon  1 Maccabees 2 Maccabees
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## The Apocryphal Books

**Apocrypha** is a Greek word meaning *things hidden*, and in ancient times this word was applied to religious writings esteemed almost as scripture by some, but which were not read to the unlearned in public. In modern Protestant usage the word "apocrypha" refers to all those writings which have *wrongly* been regarded as scripture by many in the church.

### Brief Descriptions of the Apocryphal Books

**First Esdras.** This book is someone's attempt to revise the canonical book of Ezra, supplementing it with material from the last two chapters of 2 Chronicles and the last two chapters of Nehemiah, and with an entertaining tale about three young courtiers who debate the question, "What is the strongest thing in the world?" The debate is held before the king of Persia, and the winner is to get a prize. The first maintains that it is wine; the second that it is the king himself; the third argues with some irony and humor that women are stronger than either wine or kings, but that "truth" and "the God of truth" are by far strongest. This last young man turns out to be none other than Zerubbabel, who for his prize receives generous help from the king in rebuilding Jerusalem.

**Second Esdras.** Also called the *Ezra Apocalypse*. This is a typical Jewish apocalypse, probably first written in Greek about A.D. 100. Some hold that it was originally written in Hebrew. It appears to be a composite work, compiled of two or three sources. Around A.D. 120 it was edited by an unknown Christian, and then translated into Latin. The Christian editor added some introductory and closing chapters in which reference is made to Christ, but the original Jewish composition was not changed in any important respect. This book was not included in Septuagint manuscripts, and so the Greek text has been lost. The most important witness to the original text is the Latin version, which was included in medieval manuscripts of the Vulgate. The book consists mostly of dialogues between Ezra and angels sent to him to answer his urgent theological questions about the problem of evil, and in particular the failures and afflictions of Israel. All of this is presented as if written long before by Ezra and hidden away. The book was obviously written as an encouragement to the Jews, who had recently suffered the destruction of Jerusalem (A.D. 70). It also includes some symbolical prophecies concerning the Roman empire, in which Rome is figured as a three-headed eagle that oppresses the world and is finally destroyed by a roaring lion (a figure of the Messiah). There is a fantastic story of how the Hebrew Scriptures were all destroyed in the Babylonian exile and then perfectly restored by the miraculous inspiration of Ezra as he dictated all of the books to five scribes over a period of forty days. Along with the canonical books, Ezra dictates 70 secret books that are to be reserved for the wise. Second Esdras is presented as being one of these secret books. Martin Luther omitted First and Second Esdras from the Apocrypha of his German Bible in 1534, and both books were also rejected by the Roman Catholics at the Council of Trent in 1546. Nevertheless, they were included in the Apocrypha of the King James version.

**Tobit.** This is a didactic and romantic tale written in Aramaic probably around 200 B.C., and afterwards translated into Greek. Fragments of the Aramaic text were found among the Dead Sea Scrolls. The story is of a Jewish family taken to Nineveh during the Babylonian captivity. Tobit, the blind father, sends his son Tobias on a journey to collect a debt. On his way Tobias is led by an angel in disguise (Raphael) to the house of a virgin who had been married seven times, but whose husbands were all slain by a demon on their wedding night. Tobias marries the girl and drives away the demon by burning the heart of a certain fish in the bedroom, and with the help of Raphael. He returns home with the money and his bride, and then heals his father's eyes with the fish's gall. The story is sprinkled with pious observations and exhortations, and concludes with Tobias' departure from Nineveh, which, after the natural death of Tobit, is destroyed in judgment.

**Judith.** Written in Hebrew about 150 B.C., and soon translated into Greek. The Hebrew text is lost. It is a story about a beautiful young widow named Judith (meaning "Jewess") who saves her city from a military siege. She goes out to the enemy commander's camp, allures him, gets him drunk, and then cuts off his head while he sleeps in his tent. She returns with his head and shows it to her people, exhorting the men to go forth and rout the enemy, which they do. Throughout this story she is presented as a woman who is very keen to observe the Law of Moses.

**Additions to Esther.** These consist of six long paragraphs inserted in the Septuagint version of Esther in several places, and are thought to be the work of an Egyptian Jew writing around 170 B.C. They are designed to provide the book with a more religious tone, and to make it clear that it was for the sake of their piety that the Jews were delivered from the evil designs of the Gentiles related in the canonical book. These additions were put at the end of the book by Jerome when he made his Latin translation because he accepted only the Hebrew text as canonical.

**Wisdom of Solomon.** Sometimes called simply *Wisdom*. This book is a collection of theological and devotional essays first written in Greek by an Alexandrian Jew about 100 B.C., but presented in such a way that they seem to be discourses of king Solomon. The author compares Jewish religion with Greek philosophy, and shows faith to be the highest form of wisdom. The book is edifying and worthy of much respect. It has often been quoted by Christian writers in the past.

**Ecclesiasticus,** originally called *The Wisdom of Jesus son of Sirach*, or simply *Sirach*. Written first in Hebrew about 200 B.C. by a wisdom teacher named Joshua Ben Sirach, and translated into Greek by his grandson around 135 B.C. The book consists mainly of proverbs and other wise sayings about common life, strung together in short discourses or organized in topical sections. It also contains longer discourses about religious life and faith, which are well worth reading. It came to be called *Ecclesiasticus* (the "churchly" book) because in early times it was often read in church services, being the most highly regarded of the apocryphal books. This book should not be confused with the canonical book of *Ecclesiastes*.

**Baruch.** A composite book of five chapters, in which there are exhortations against association with idolatry, celebration of the Law as God's "wisdom," and encouragements and promises to faithful Jews, collected together and edited probably about 150 B.C. The material is presented as if by Baruch, the disciple of Jeremiah, during the time of the Babylonian exile.

**Epistle of Jeremiah.** Often printed as chapter 6 of *Baruch*, this short work purports to be a letter from Jeremiah to the Jews in exile in Babylon, but this is generally regarded as an imposture, or a mere literary device used by an author writing around 200 B.C. It is essentially a short tract against pagan idolatry, and makes much use of ridicule and sarcasm.

**Song of the Three Holy Children** (including *The Prayer of Azariah*). An embellishment of the ordeal of Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego recorded in the canonical book of Daniel, designed to be added after verse 23 of the third chapter. It consists of prayers and hymns of the sort which might have



been offered to God by the three while in the furnace.

**The Story of Susanna.** A short story about how two lecherous old men tried to compel a beautiful and pious young wife, Susanna, to lie with them, and then publicly accused her of adultery when she refused. At a trial they give false testimony and she is condemned by the council of elders. But Daniel the prophet is divinely inspired to know the facts of the case, and he exposes the two men in a second trial, after which they are put to death. This story was inserted between chapters 12 and 14 in the Septuagint version of Daniel, and at the beginning of the book in Theodotion's version.

**Bel and the Dragon.** This is a combination of two stories which were also attached to Daniel in the Septuagint, at the end of the book. The story of *Bel* concerns a Babylonian idol of that name, to which Daniel refused to give an offering. When he was challenged he told the Persian king that the vain idol had no need of offerings because it could not eat anything. The king then required the priests of Bel to prove otherwise or die. The priests tried to deceive the king by entering the temple of Bel at night through a secret entrance and eating the food-offerings themselves, but they were exposed by Daniel, who had spread ashes on the temple floor, revealing their footprints. The priests of Bel were then slain and their temple destroyed. In the story of *the Dragon* Daniel refuses to worship an actual living "dragon," and accepts a challenge to slay the dragon without sword or staff. He feeds the dragon a concoction of pitch, fat, and hair, which causes it to burst open and die. Daniel's enemies then cause him to be thrown into the lion's den again, but the hungry lions are fed with abundant food brought from Israel by the prophet Habakkuk, who is transported to Babylon with the food by angels. Both of these stories were evidently written around 150-100 B.C.

**The Prayer of Manasseh.** This is a psalm of repentance, composed to suit the situation of Manasseh, the king of Judah who was carried captive to Babylon (see 2 Chronicles 33:11-13, where the psalm was probably intended for insertion in the Septuagint). This book was rejected by the Roman Catholics at the Council of Trent in 1546.

**First Maccabees.** This book was written in Hebrew about 100 B.C., and soon afterwards translated into Greek. The Hebrew text was seen by Jerome, but is now lost. It is a sober but stirring historical account of Jewish history from 175 B.C. to 135 B.C., during which time the Jews of Palestine fought for and gained national independence from their Greek overlords. It is highly regarded by historians as a source of accurate information.

**Second Maccabees.** This is not a sequel to First Maccabees, but a different account of many of the same events related in that book down to 161 B.C., combined with many fanciful and legendary additions. The writer's interests are religious rather than historical, and he uses the history as a backdrop for advancing religious ideas current among the Jews of Alexandria during the first century B.C. It is generally thought to be later than First Maccabees, but earlier than A.D. 70. Some statements in this book support the Roman Catholic teachings on purgatory, prayers for the dead, and the intercessory work of glorified "saints."

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### Statements on the Apocrypha from Reformation Days

**Luther Bible** (1534). Title to Apocrypha section: "APOCRYPHA, Das sind Bücher, so der heiligen Schrift nicht gleich gehalten, und doch nützlich und gut zu lesen sind" ("APOCRYPHA, that is, Books which are not to be esteemed like the Holy Scriptures, and yet which are useful and good to read.")

**Coverdale Bible** (1535). Title to Apocrypha: "APOCRYPHA: The books and treatises which among the Fathers of old are not reckoned to be of like authority with the other books of the Bible, neither are they found in the Canon of Hebrew."

**Geneva Bible** (1560). Preface: "The books that follow in order after the Prophets unto the New Testament, are called Apocrypha, that is, books which were not received by a common consent to be read and expounded publicly in the Church, neither yet served to prove any point of Christian religion save in so much as they had the consent of the other scriptures called canonical to confirm the same, or rather whereon they were grounded: but as books proceeding from godly men they were received to be read for the advancement and furtherance of the knowledge of history and for the instruction of godly manners: which books declare that at all times God had an especial care of His Church, and left them not utterly destitute of teachers and means to confirm them in the hope of the promised Messiah, and also witness that those calamities that God sent to his Church were according to his providence, who had both so threatened by his prophets, and so brought it to pass, for the destruction of their enemies and for the trial of his children."

**Decree of the Council of Trent** (1546). "The holy ecumenical and general Council of Trent . . . following the example of the orthodox Fathers, receives and venerates all the books of the Old and New Testament . . . and also the traditions pertaining to faith and conduct . . . with an equal sense of devotion and reverence . . . If, however, any one receive not, as sacred and canonical, the said books entire with all their parts, as they have by custom been read in the Catholic Church, and as they are contained in the old Latin Vulgate, and knowingly and deliberately rejects the aforesaid traditions, let him be accursed."

**Articles of Religion of the Church of England** (1563). Sixth Article: "In the name of Holy Scripture we do understand those canonical books of the Old and New Testament, of whose authority was never any doubt in the Church. . . And the other books (as Jerome saith) the Church doth read for example of life and instruction of manners: but yet doth it not apply them to establish any doctrine."

**Westminster Confession** (1647). Chapter 1 § 3: "The books commonly called Apocrypha, not being of divine inspiration, are no part of the Canon of Scripture; and therefore are of no authority in the Church of God, nor to be any otherwise approved, or made use of, than other human writings."



## The Septuagint: God's Blessing on Translation

by Debra E. Anderson

We affirm and avow, that the very meanest translation of the Bible in English, set forth by men of our profession, ... containeth the Word of God, nay, is the Word of God. As the King's Speech which he uttered in Parliament, being translated into *French, Dutch, Italian, and Latin*, is still the King's Speech, though it be not interpreted by every translator with the like grace, nor peradventure so fitly for phrase, nor so expressly for sense, everywhere. ... No cause therefore why the Word translated should be denied to be the Word.<sup>1</sup>

What the translators of the Authorised Version stated in answer to those who opposed their work of translating the Bible into English, they and many throughout the centuries have also recognised regarding translations into other languages: that the Word of God in translation is still the Word of God. This was true of the Authorised Version; it was also true of one of the first translations of the Old Testament ever done, the Greek Septuagint.

### The Old Testament

The people of God under the Old Covenant spoke Hebrew, and God moved His chosen men to write His Word in the Old Testament in Hebrew (and, in a very few verses, Aramaic). For many centuries this was sufficient for His people; they could read the Law and teach it to their children as the Lord commanded (Deuteronomy 6). The ancient language of the Patriarchs served the people well, and they continued to use it to their advantage for many centuries.

But their sin changed this. The people abandoned the God of their Scriptures and served idols; they failed to keep the Sabbaths as commanded in the Law. In order to punish the people, bring them back to the Lord and give the land its Sabbath rest (2 Chronicles 36.21), the Lord sent the people into exile, into the lands of the heathen Assyrians and Babylonians. The northern tribes of Israel never returned, and only a remnant of the southern tribes of Judah was restored to the land.

Judah's seventy years of exile brought about numerous changes amongst the people. No longer did they abandon the true God and disobey His Law so overtly. But at the same time, they were no longer the separated Hebrew people they had once been. Many had taken foreign wives and sired children who were not taught the language of their fathers (Nehemiah 13.23, 24). Many chose to stay in the countries to which they had been exiled, where they lost the ability to read Hebrew.

Between 336-324 BC, Alexander the Great, king of Macedon, conquered much of what was then the known world. In addition to being a great military conqueror, he was also a cultural conqueror, bringing with him into his new territories Greek culture and language. Alexandria, Egypt, became the seat of his Hellenistic culture. A considerable number of Jews, particularly those of Alexandria, accepted Greek as their language, with many never learning the language of their fathers. To Jews both outside of Israel and in, the Hebrew Scriptures had become a closed book. Even the tradition of passing the Scriptures orally from parent to child was in danger of being lost. The people would need the Scriptures in their own language if they were to continue in the faith.

More Jews lived outside of Palestine than in it. Communities of Jews could be found in Alexandria (Egypt), Antioch (Syria), Asia Minor, Greece, and Italy. Very few of them spoke Hebrew or even read it. Their language was Greek, the *lingua franca* of the Mediterranean world.<sup>2</sup>

In addition, the Old Testament was a closed book to those outside the Jewish nation. God wanted His people to be "a kingdom of priests, and a holy nation" (Exodus 19.6), unto whom the peoples of the nations could flee for salvation. The Scriptures being in Hebrew only made this more difficult, particularly as the coming of the One who would be the Light to the Gentiles drew nearer.

### The Septuagint

The problem of the lack of Scriptures was solved c. 250 BC with the appearance of the Greek translation of the Hebrew Scriptures, a translation known for millennia as the Septuagint.

This is the translation of the *Seventy* interpreters, commonly so called, which prepared the way for our Saviour among the Gentiles by written preaching, as Saint *John Baptist* did among the *Jews* by vocal. ... the *Greek* tongue was well known and made familiar to most inhabitants in *Asia*, by reason of the conquest that there the *Grecians* had made, as also by the colonies, which thither they had sent. For the same causes also it was well understood in many places of *Europe*, yea, and of *Africa* too. Therefore the word of God being set forth in *Greek*, becometh hereby like a candle set upon a candlestick, which giveth light to all that are in the house, or like a proclamation sounded forth in the market-place, which most men presently take knowledge of; and therefore that language was fittest to contain the Scriptures, both for the first preachers of the Gospel to appeal unto for witness, and for the learners also of those times to make search and trial by.<sup>3</sup>

The history of the translation of the Septuagint is shrouded in myth and legend. According to Aristeas, a 2nd-century BC Hellenistic Jew, Ptolemy Philadelphus set up his court in Alexandria and set about expanding the library there to include as many works as possible. The president of the library, Demetrius, told the king about the Books of the Law of the Jews, and urged the king to have these translated into Greek and added to the library. According to this account, Philadelphus sent for seventy-two Hebrew scholars, six from each tribe of Israel, to undertake the work. He secluded these men on the island of Phares, where each worked separately on his own translation, without consultation with one another. According to the legend, when they came together to compare their work, the seventy-two copies proved to be identical.

This story, while highly unlikely, convinced many that the Septuagint had a supernatural quality which helped gain its acceptance for several hundred years, until the time of Jerome some four hundred years after Christ. Some of the Jewish Talmudists claimed inspiration for the Septuagint, stating that God inspired the hearts of each translator.<sup>4</sup>

At some time during the second and third centuries B.C., the Hebrew Bible (i.e., the Old Testament) was translated into Greek. No one is precisely sure of the history of the Septuagint, but in the synagogues of Greek-speaking Jews, it attained a wide acceptance long before the birth of Christ. One might suppose that the Jews would have resisted a translation from Hebrew to Greek, either rejecting it as disrespectful, or looking down on it as an inferior shadow of the real Hebrew Bible. But surprisingly the new translation was revered as much as the Hebrew. The Septuagint was thought of as the *Bible itself*.<sup>5</sup>

Jesus,<sup>6</sup> the apostles and the New Testament writers also accepted the Septuagint,<sup>7</sup> using it in conjunction with the Hebrew.

The Septuagint version having been current for about three centuries before the time when the books of the New Testament were written, it is not surprising that the Apostles should have used it more often than not in making citations from the Old Testament. They used it as an honestly-made version in pretty general use at the time when they wrote. They did not on every occasion give an authoritative translation of each passage *de novo*, but they used what was already familiar to the ears of converted Hellenists, when it was sufficiently accurate to suit the matter in hand.<sup>8</sup>

With this the translators of the Authorised Version agree.

The translation of the *Seventy* dissenteth from the original in many places, neither doth it come near it for perspicuity, gravity, majesty; yet which of the Apostles did condemn it? Condemn it? Nay, they used it, ... which they would not have done, nor by their example of using it, so grace and commend it to the Church, if it had been unworthy the appellation and name of the Word of God.<sup>9</sup>

Perhaps one of the most important instances of the New Testament writers' use of the Septuagint is Matthew 1.23, in which the Gospel writer quotes Isaiah 7.14. The Hebrew word *almah*, argued by some in our day to indicate a young woman of marriageable age but one not necessarily a virgin, is translated in the Septuagint as *parthenos*. This Greek word means virgin, indicating that the Jewish translators before the time of Christ understood the prophecy correctly. Other Jews after the advent of the Christian era translated the word into Greek as *neanis*, "young woman", in order to distance the prophecy from fulfilment in Jesus. Matthew quotes the Septuagint, applying it to Jesus.

Other New Testament writers also used the clear translation from the Septuagint in their writings. In Hebrews 1.6 is a quotation from Psalm 97.7. The Old Testament passage speaks of the "graven images", "idols" and "gods". The final word in Hebrew is *elohim* (gods); the Septuagint renders this *aggeloi* (angels). The book of Hebrews takes the Septuagint rendering and incorporates it, in which is urged that "all the angels of God" worship Jesus.

For the Church Fathers, the Septuagint was not only the Old Testament they used in their study, writing and preaching, it was the one they used when translating the Old Testament into Latin. In time it came to be considered the inspired Old Testament, even above the Hebrew. Justin Martyr believed that in instances in which the Hebrew and Greek differed, the Septuagint was the correct text and that the Jews had "altogether taken away many Scriptures from the translations effected by those seventy elders".<sup>10</sup> Most Fathers quoted from the Septuagint rather than the Hebrew when the two differed. Irenaeus relates the Aristeas story, and states that "The Scriptures were acknowledged as truly divine ... interpreted [translated] by the inspiration of God".<sup>11</sup> Clement of Alexandria said that "it was not alien to the inspiration of God, who gave the



prophecy, also to produce the translation, and make it as it were Greek prophecy", <sup>12</sup> and based his claim that Amos the prophet was the father of Isaiah upon the identical spelling of Amos and Amoz in the Greek. <sup>13</sup>

It was not until the end of the 4th century AD that the ancient Church finally began to relinquish its attachment to the Septuagint. Other Old Testament translations were made into Greek, primarily those of Aquila, Symmachus and Theodotion. These three men, believed to be Judaizers, produced editions which displayed their heretical tendencies. The growing number of translations moved Origen to compare the editions, producing a polyglot Bible, the Hexapla, comprised of editions of the Hebrew, the Septuagint and several of the other Greek translations, which exhibited the differences between them.

Jerome for many years had translated the Old Testament from the Septuagint into Latin. In the latter part of the century, however, he recognised the differences between the Greek Septuagint and the Hebrew, and began making translations of the Hebrew books, primarily for the benefit and use of his friends. "Jerome was often criticised for using the Hebrew text rather than the Septuagint as the basis for his translation, but he rightly argued that the Septuagint was not inspired and that a better translation could be made from the Hebrew, the original language of the Old Testament." <sup>14</sup> In time his translation, the Vulgate, grew in importance and became the accepted Latin version.

For a thousand years, the Vulgate was the prominent version used by the Western Church. But God moved the Reformers to turn their attention back to the Bible in the original languages. Even at that, the Reformers -- as the Jews in exile had done -- recognised the need for people to have the Scriptures in a language they could understand. Thus, men such as Luther and Tyndale used the original language texts as the bases for their work. The translators of the Authorised Version wrote,

How shall men meditate in that which they cannot understand? How shall they understand that which is kept close in an unknown tongue? as it is written, *Except I know the power of the voice, I shall be to him that speaketh a barbarian, and he that speaketh shall be a barbarian to me.* The Apostle excepteth no tongue; not Hebrew the ancientest, not Greek the most copious, not Latin the finest. ... Translation it is that openeth the window, to let in the light; that breaketh the shell, that we may eat the kernel; that putteth aside the curtain, that we may look into the holy place ... <sup>15</sup>

Thus, the Scriptures, translated from the original languages, became available to people throughout Europe.

### The Septuagint Today

Today the Hebrew text of the Old Testament is available to people around the world. The Hebrew translated into a multitude of languages has made the Old Testament accessible to millions. Greek readers have the Old Testament in their own language, which is more readily understood than the antiquated form of Greek found in the Septuagint. Thus, many question the need for the Septuagint today.

However, the Septuagint continues to fill a place, particularly in Bible translation. The Hebrew of the Old Testament, while beautiful in its phrasing and form, is not always clear. The Septuagint, having been translated without anti-Christian bias and without the warping of modern liberal or neo-orthodox theology, provides an edition of the Old Testament which predates the earliest available Hebrew manuscript. Thus, although inferior to the Hebrew text, on occasion the Septuagint is a helpful aid in translation and Old Testament study.

More beneficial to the average Christian is the acknowledgement that our Saviour and His closest disciples used a translation of the Scriptures. We can rest in the knowledge that it is not necessary to read Greek and Hebrew in order to have access to the Word of God.

It pleased God to bless the Septuagint, and His people through it; even so He has been pleased to provide His Word in a variety of other translations and languages to His people throughout the centuries throughout the world. May He continue to do so, until that day in which His Word reaches its final fulfilment!

### Endnotes:

- <sup>1</sup> *The Translators to the Reader: Being a Reprint of the Original Preface to the Authorized Version of 1611* (London, England: the Trinitarian Bible Society, 1911, 1998), p. 20. It would be a most interesting debate, but must remain a matter of conjecture, whether the Authorised Version translators would have taken the same view of the plethora of translations and editions of the Scripture which abound today. Many such translations are based on altogether less sound textual and translational principles than those to which those men adhered and are, therefore, in the view of this Society, unworthy of the designation of the Word of God.
- <sup>2</sup> Jakob van Bruggen, *The Future of the Bible* (Nashville, TN, USA: Thomas Nelson Inc., Publishers, 1978), p. 37.
- <sup>3</sup> *Translators to the Reader*, p. 13.
- <sup>4</sup> BT *Megilla* 9a, *Sof* 35.
- <sup>5</sup> van Bruggen, pp. 37-8.
- <sup>6</sup> One example of Jesus' use of the Septuagint is found in His refutation of the Devil in Matthew 4.4. The Hebrew in Deuteronomy 8.3 has "mouth of the LORD"; the Septuagint has "mouth of God". It is this latter that Jesus quotes.
- <sup>7</sup> This is not to say that Jesus or the New Testament writers considered the Septuagint to be inspired as the Hebrew was, or that we should. Only what the writers actually quoted in their canonical writings can be considered inspired, and that only because they quoted it.
- <sup>8</sup> Lancelot C. L. Brenton, "Introduction" to *The Septuagint with Apocrypha: Greek and English* (Peabody, MA, USA: Hendrickson Publishers, 1986, 1992), p. iv.
- <sup>9</sup> *Translators to the Reader*, p. 21.
- <sup>10</sup> Justin, *Dialogue with Trypho*, ch. 71.
- <sup>11</sup> Irenaeus, *Against Heresies*, 3.21.2.
- <sup>12</sup> Clement, *The Miscellanies*, 2.22.
- <sup>13</sup> *Ibid.*, 1.21.
- <sup>14</sup> Diana Severance, "The Feisty Jerome: His Bible Legacy Lasted Over 1,000 Years", *Glimpses* Issue #57 [http://www.gospelcom.net/chi/glimpses/fiftyseven.html], 1994.
- <sup>15</sup> *Translators to the Reader*, p. 12.

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